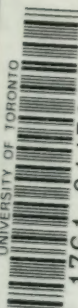


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# THE PRIME MINISTERS OF ENGLAND

EDITED BY

STUART J. REID

THE EARL OF ROSEBERY

THE  
PRIME MINISTERS of ENGLAND  
A SERIES OF POLITICAL BIOGRAPHIES

EDITED BY

STUART J. REID

Author of "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SYDNEY SMITH," etc.

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THE EARL OF  
ROSEBURY

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SAMUEL HENRY JEYES



LONDON  
J. M. DENT & CO.  
ALDINE HOUSE, BEDFORD STREET  
1906

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## PREFACE

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THE writer of the following account of Lord Rosebery's public career wishes to acknowledge his obligations to the successive volumes of the Annual Register, to Mr. John Morley's "Life of Gladstone," Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice's recent biography of Lord Granville, Mr. Herbert Paul's "History of Modern England," and many other standard works which he has consulted. He has also made free and profitable use of Mr. T. F. G. Coates's "Life and Speeches of Lord Rosebery," Miss Jane T. Stoddart's "Illustrated Biography of Lord Rosebery," Mr. J. A. Hammerton's "Lord Rosebery, Imperialist," and "The Foreign Policy of Lord Rosebery" (anonymous).

He has to thank the Editor of this series, Mr. Stuart J. Reid, for many valuable suggestions.





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# LORD ROSEBERY

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## CHAPTER I

Birth and parentage—Eton and Christ Church—Early travels—First speech in Parliament—Defence of Racing—Scottish history—Address to the Social Science Congress.

OF the gifts from nature and fortune that smooth the road to success in English public life, none perhaps was lacking at the birth of Lord Rosebery. Equally in evidence, however, were opportunities and temptations that point to more facile paths. It is the object of this sketch to describe the use which he has made of his advantages, especially during the period when he was the last of the Liberal Prime Ministers of Queen Victoria. Born on 7 May, 1847, at 20 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, he was the son of the Lord Dalmeny who died in 1851, and grandson of the fourth Earl of Rosebery. His father, who did not live to complete his forty-second year, had sat in the House of Commons as member for the Stirling Burghs from 1832 to 1847, held office as a Lord of the Admiralty in Lord Melbourne's Administration, and published 'An Address to the Middle Classes on the subject of Gymnastic Exercises.' It was written in the fluent style of the period, and contained much excellent advice, which may have been required at the time when it was offered. But in the light

of subsequent developments in sports, games, and athletics, the observations it records and the lesson it enforces seem curiously antiquated. 'In other countries,' wrote Lord Dalmeny, 'the tendency is to think too much of diversions, and too little of work. Here the tendency is the reverse; to devote our whole attention to business and none to recreation. . . . We are, indeed, rich in literary and scientific societies, mechanics' reading clubs; rich in institutions for bewildering and oppressing the overwrought brains of our middle and operative classes with crude speculations and ill-digested knowledge. But where are the institutions for gymnastics? Where are the arenas where the limbs, the sinews, the spirits of our merchants may be recreated and refreshed by manly diversions? Where are the noble sports of our ancestors? Where are the rude but invigorating pastimes which hardened their muscles, steeled their nerves, exhilarated their spirits, and gladdened their hearts? . . . We are the wisest, the greatest, but the saddest nation in the world. . . . Perhaps it may be said, "All is very well as it is, and where is the necessity for change? Every large community, every closely-thronged city, must have its proportion of mortality and sickness. This is the ordination of Providence and the lot of humanity, and why engage in a vain attempt to combat an established and immutable order of things?" All is not well. . . . This doctrine, that all is well that exists, is a dangerous delusion, and is, after all, the lazy excuse of those spurious philosophers who avert their faces from abuses to escape the trouble of reforming them.'

This last sentence, and some others, in the pamphlet written by the father who did not live long enough to win distinction might have come from the pen of the accom-

plished son. It is, perhaps, worth note that the young Whig patrician was independent enough to scoff at the 'crude speculations and ill-digested knowledge,' which, so he thought, were produced by the philosophy and inquiry of the Early Victorian period. The thought of that robust and fertile epoch was essentially Radical, yet Lord Rosebery's father was able to treat it as having no relation to the Liberal principles which he represented in Parliament, and quietly put it aside with an air of tolerant indifference. Nor will it escape remark that the heir to a Scotch earldom looked on 'merchants' and 'operatives' as both being members of 'the middle classes' and equally in need of advice from a person who knew what was good for them. The phrase was used and, no doubt, accepted without a suggestion or suspicion of offence. And this was little more than half a century ago.

The mother of Lord Rosebery (who subsequently became Duchess of Cleveland) was the only daughter of the fourth Earl Stanhope, and one of the most beautiful and gifted ladies about the Court of Queen Victoria. The distinction of her personal appearance, the gaiety and wit of her conversation, her very considerable literary attainments, and her interest in historical studies, rendered her one of the most remarkable women of a reign which was conspicuous for the development of feminine intellect and ambition. Deductions in heredity are confidently drawn only by persons unacquainted with the problems which they undertake to solve, but it may fairly be assumed that some of the personal qualities and aptitudes displayed by Lord Rosebery were either inherited from his mother or inspired by her fascinating example.

Yet he owed as much, or almost as much, to training and

instruction at school as to his descent and home surroundings. After a period spent with Mr. W. R. Lee at Brighton, the boy, then Lord Dalmeny, and heir to the Earldom of Rosebery, was sent to Eton in September, 1861, where he fell under the influence of Mr. William Johnson, better known under the name, which he afterwards assumed, of Cory. Other scholars of the period were more learned, more exact, and wider in their range than the author of 'Ionica,' but few modern Englishmen have so completely absorbed and assimilated the spirit and meaning of classical culture. It is possible, perhaps it is easy, to be idle at Eton, but at none of those foundations where a more strenuous life is inculcated and enforced, not even at Rugby or Winchester, is there a similar atmosphere of intellectual accomplishment. Lads who are not wedded to great thoughts and high endeavour at least cohabit with them, and form intellectual associations which they do not altogether shake off when they mix in the rough-and-tumble of after life. The Old Etonian may be ignorant, or inefficient, or incurably lazy, but he is seldom a Philistine. Art, literature, and the personal side of English history have been to the most graceless youngster a distinct part of the daily life of his 'people at home' or 'people his people know,' and he always preserves a certain respect, though he may have no personal liking, for the harmless hobbies of the noble or opulent amateur. In a school society like Eton the tone is set by the traditions of aristocracy, and even the 'young barbarians' keep up a bowing acquaintance with the Higher Life.

Acute, susceptible, and precociously clever, it would have been in any circumstances impossible for Lady Dalmeny's son not to inhale some of the intellectual aroma of a place

so rich in romantic and historical associations. His intimate friendship with William Cory—for such his relationship towards his tutor rapidly became—enabled him to reap some of the benefits of Eton without, perhaps, taking a proportionate share in the labours. He was, indeed, ‘one of those who like the palm without the dust.’ In the ‘Letters and Journals of William Cory’ many references occur to the brilliant but not industrious pupil. ‘I am doing all I can,’ wrote the tutor, ‘to make him a scholar; anyhow, he will be an orator, and, if not a poet, such a man as poets delight in.’ Already the lad’s interest and curiosity had been stirred by the public and private life of Pitt, and they were further stimulated by Cory’s letters and conversation.

In 1864 they visited Rome, and had many eager talks together. It was the influence and kindly supervision of Cory that compensated, in some degree, for the imperfect use which he made at Eton of the opportunities for sound and systematic instruction, and for the abrupt curtailment of his career at Oxford. As an undergraduate he was fired with the ambition to win the Derby, and it was his persistence in keeping racehorses that led to his final quarrel with the authorities at Christ Church. All this time, however, and for many years afterwards, he maintained an affectionate correspondence with his old tutor, and the letters are sufficient proof that, if he lacked the application required for academical success, his enthusiasm for picking up knowledge by independent methods was quite unabated. It may sound paradoxical, yet it is substantially correct, that the alumnus of, perhaps, the two most famous foundations in England is largely a self-educated man. But he has always been, even in the years which show little record of



public activity, a diligent reader of books, and, as he has quite a remarkable memory, he has accumulated a very considerable store of solid knowledge. When he has been most vigorously amusing himself he has not ceased to be a student and thinker.

In 1868, two years after his matriculation at Oxford, he succeeded his grandfather as Earl of Rosebery, and, on shortly afterwards attaining his majority, took his seat in the House of Lords. It is one of the drawbacks which he laments in a singularly smooth career that he never had the chance of sitting in the House of Commons, and he showed no special eagerness to assume the duties of an hereditary legislator. The first years of his manhood were spent in sport and travelling, but in 1871 he was selected by Mr. Gladstone to second the motion for the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech. It was a memorable year, and a large part of Lord Rosebery's set oration was naturally devoted to the results of the great war between France and Germany. He received, and no doubt deserved, the kindly compliments which it is the custom to bestow upon the duly accredited novice; but it may be interesting to mention that he was evidently nervous at this formal appearance in Parliament, since it is recorded that he 'spoke with a graceful emotion which became his years.'

Not for some time did he seriously try to make for himself a position at Westminster, though on two or three occasions he intervened in debate on distinctively Scottish matters. He was occupied largely with social pleasures and on the Turf, not having been discouraged by the somewhat ignominious failure of his first Ladas to win the Derby. But he exercised, now and again, his already recognised capacity for ornamental oratory. The fashion-

able diversions and sporting tastes with which he was associated did not prevent him from earning a more serious reputation. It was not at that time considered unbecoming in a young Liberal peer to take his pleasures amongst his fellows, although even in 1873 he seems to have thought it necessary to offer a humorous defence of racing. He was asking in the House of Lords for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the capacity of the country to meet the present and future demand for horses. He jeered at the moralists who attributed every crime to the Turf, and declared that in his opinion racing was as innocent an amusement as large numbers of people could enjoy. Hunting and shooting were reserved for the wealthy, but there was no one so poor that he could not visit a race-course. In a sanguine passage which has not been verified by the event, he expressed his belief that gambling was on the decline, and asserted that there were few owners who had as much on their horses as would form the stake on an ordinary rubber of whist. As for trying to put down gambling by abolishing races, they might as well attempt to abolish rain by suppressing the gutters.

Neither Mr. Gladstone, who was the undisputed dictator of the Liberal party, nor his fellow-countrymen in Scotland, thought the worse of Lord Rosebery because he was, more or less, a racing man. The idea of banning a capable politician because he diverted himself in his own fashion either had not yet occurred to the zealots, or they had not attained such influence as to make their views count in public opinion. Mr. Gladstone had already marked Lord Rosebery in his mind as one of the coming men, and in Edinburgh he was invited to lecture before the Philosophical Institution. The subject which he chose was

the Union of England and Scotland, and the paper which he read showed how fruitful had been his studies in history. He appealed to Scotch patriotism by dwelling sympathetically on the sacrifice imposed on the smaller partner. Except her Church, she lost all that she held most dear. For the sake of commercial advantages which few understood, and most despised, she was reduced from a king-giving kingdom to a province without a legislature. Her haughty aristocracy was despised and ignored; her capital, famous and brilliant, was shorn of its Court, its society, and its Parliament, and descended to the level of a country town. Nor were these sacrifices trivial at the time when they were made. After these admissions Lord Rosebery called attention to the other side of the picture. He spoke of the many great men who had come from Scotland and won fame in England. Their ancestors had put their hand to a mighty work, and it prospered. Two great nations had been welded into one Empire, and local jealousies moulded into a common patriotism. On such an achievement their descendants must gaze with awe and astonishment—the means had been so adverse and the result so astonishing.

In the Sessions of 1872 and 1873 he attested his Radicalism—for he was then regarded as belonging to the advanced wing of the Liberal Party—by arguing in the House of Lords against applying, in the Scottish Education Bill, any part of the rates to instruction in denominational religion, and protested against the statement that the ‘religious difficulty’ had no existence in Scotland. He proposed, therefore, that the Cowper-Temple Clause which had been established in England should be extended to Scotland. This, he believed, would result in the peaceful settlement of a long-

vexed question. This suggestion, however, did not find favour with the official Liberals, and was rejected. In other Scottish matters, such as Church Patronage and the position of the representative Peers, Lord Rosebery showed an active interest both in 1873 and 1874. But his Parliamentary appearances were somewhat fitful at this period, and it was by means of a non-political utterance that he first attracted that public attention which he has ever afterwards been able to command at pleasure. His address to the Social Science Congress at Glasgow, in September, 1874, raised him at once to the first place among the younger generation of public men. It was, indeed, a very remarkable performance for a man of twenty-seven, who had never before given any striking indications either of thought or industry. It did not cut very deep, but it showed sympathetic study of social conditions, it formulated a distinct yet not extravagant programme, and it abounded with glittering phrases.

It was, he said, the duty of a Social Science Congress to raise the condition of the nation by means which Parliament was unable or disdained to employ—an illimitable field of operations. The 'children of toil,' he said, were not mere machines of production, but vehicles of intelligence. They were a dark and mighty power like the Cyclopean inmates of *Ætna*. Yet they had not succeeded in making their wants, their creeds, and their interests sufficiently intelligible. Why, otherwise, had so little been done to advance their condition? Why had both parties failed to win their confidence? How else was it that, when the working man had made his voice heard on any question, it came like thunder in a clear sky? It was possible that some great catastrophe, such as a European war, might find us unable to deal with a teeming population 'confined within so small

an ark.' Suppose, again, that the United States should fail to provide employment for the quarter of a million emigrants that we were accustomed to send out every year. Our civilisation was but little removed from barbarism—witness the daily reports of outrage in the press, the horrors revealed in Lord Ashley's Commission in 1842, and similar horrors of quite recent date. 'And yet, after all, we can only come to the hackneyed conclusion that the sole remedy for this state of things is education, a humanizing education. It is not a particularly brilliant or original thing to say, but severe truth is seldom brilliant or original.'

The need of compulsory universal education having been enforced by a variety of illustrations, Lord Rosebery declared that we were living riotously and recklessly—consuming more coal than we need and spending selfishly the rightful heritage of posterity. We ought to be husbanding our powers and educating our people. There were no new dominions to explore; our island was 'no more capable of expansion than a quarter-deck.' Look at the industrial progress of Switzerland. It was due to technical education. Consider the deficiency in this country of rational training for commercial pursuits. In agriculture, again, there was need of special teaching both for farmers at home and for intending emigrants. Was there any instruction in the business of legislation? Macaulay told us that it was considered wonderful that the Elder Pitt had never read 'Vathek.' But could we feel any certainty that every member of Parliament had read 'The Wealth of Nations'? Consider the strikes of working men against their employers. Co-operation was the natural remedy, but it required a more general intelligence and a greater accumulation of capital among the working classes than existed



at that time. The housing problem was largely a question of locomotion. Tramways were 'the inconvenience of the opulent, but the luxury of the poor,' and you might measure the extent of democracy in a country by the extent of its tramways. But though there was in great towns a need for cheap transit, yet a tendency was observable to diminish these facilities.

After discussing such projects as the Peabody Trustees' scheme and the various stages in factory legislation, Lord Rosebery passed on to the colonizing mission of the British nation. One of the subjects discussed at the Congress was what were the best means for drawing together the interests of the United Kingdom, India, and the Colonies. 'The primary means are to send forth colonists who shall be worthy of the country they leave and the destinies they seek. But whether we keep them in England or they pass from us, we must look to the nurture of this race of kings.

. . . . .

Will the great stream pass from us a torpid flood, composed of emigrants like some we now send forth, who shake the dust from their feet and swear undying enmity to us, or shall it be a broad and beneficent river of life, fertilizing as the Nile, beloved as the Ganges, sacred as the Jordan, separated, indeed, from us by the ocean, but, like that fabled fountain Arethuse, which, passing under the sea from Greece into Sicily, retained its original source in Arcadia? We do not know what our fate may be; we have no right, perhaps, to hope that we may be an exception to the rule by which nations prove the period of growth, and of grandeur, and of decay. It may be that all we most esteem shall pass away like the glories of Babylon. But if we have

done our duty well, even though our history should pass away, and our country become

An island salt and bare,  
The haunt of seals, and owls, and seamews' clang,

she may be remembered not ungratefully as the affluent mother of giant Commonwealths and peaceful Empires that shall perpetuate the best qualities of the race.'

The Social Science Congress was the birth of a disturbed yet formative epoch. 'Everywhere,' said Lord Rosebery, 'there was breaking out some strange manifestation. The grotesque congregation of the Shakers, the agricultural Socialism of Harris, the polygamous Socialism of Mormon, the lewd quackery of Free Love, the mad blank misery of Nihilism, the tragic frenzy of the Parisian Commune, are portents no observer can neglect.' Most of these movements are either dead or languishing, and the Social Science Congress itself has disappeared. Perhaps the most permanent fruit of its labours was the spirit of intelligent inquiry which it set itself to organize, and which Lord Rosebery so happily embodied in the Address that made men look to him as one of the future statesmen of the British Empire.

## CHAPTER II

General Election of 1874—Mr. Gladstone's retirement—The Eastern Question—Reputation of England—Lord Rosebery and Mr. Gladstone—Representation of Midlothian—Lord Rosebery's marriage.

THE General Election of 1874 resulted in a signal discomfiture of the Liberal party and a personal rebuff to Mr. Gladstone. His proposal to abolish the Income Tax had not struck the imagination of the electors, nor did some of his colleagues disguise the resentment which they felt at his having made the appeal to the country at a moment which they considered inopportune. It is the undoubted privilege of a Prime Minister to act in this respect on his personal judgment, but the members of a Cabinet are apt to feel themselves aggrieved when their advice has not been taken in a matter which so closely affects the fortunes of the whole party. Perhaps the self-reliance of Mr. Gladstone would have been less sharply criticized if his bid for a renewal of power had been successful. But this was impossible. The party was torn in sunder by the feud between the official Liberals who had consented to the well-known compromise on the question of religious education in the elementary schools and the Nonconformist Radicals, led by Mr. Miall, who had vainly held out for the institution of a purely secular system. There was disagreement also on the movement for extending the franchise to the agricultural labourer, while the country as a whole was too prosperous to care

about the financial retrenchment which was one of the main planks in Mr. Gladstone's platform. Still in the enjoyment of the artificial expansion of trade brought about by the Franco-German War, the middle-class electors did not trouble about national expenditure. The disestablishment of the Irish Church and the Irish Land Act of 1870 had alienated many of the more cautious Liberals; the abolition of purchase in the Army had given offence in influential quarters; finally, the Licensing Act of 1872 had roused the unrelenting opposition of a powerful trade. Hitherto it had divided its favours equally between the two historical parties. Henceforth it became, and has remained, essentially Conservative.

A defeated party is always apt to turn on its leader, and Mr. Gladstone, who had so long dominated its counsels, was not the man to listen to remonstrance or accept advice. He preferred private life to a limitation of his authority. A more or less confidential intimation of his intention to retire was sent to Lord Granville, and this was shortly followed by the formal announcement. He saw no advantage, he wrote, in continuing to act as leader of the Liberal party; at the age of sixty-five, and after forty-two years of laborious public life, he felt himself entitled to retire. This course, he added, was dictated to him by his personal views as to the best method of spending the remaining years of his life. His decision was accepted by the party, and, after a short struggle between the moderate and extreme Whigs, Lord Hartington (the present Duke of Devonshire) was appointed to succeed him.

It is unnecessary to refer to the early years of the Disraeli Administration, except to mention that soon after the Conservatives had come into power the Eastern Question

was revived in an acute form. Though the proposal made in the Andrassy Note of 1875, that the Powers should act together in laying pressure on the Porte to institute reforms in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was considered by the British Government, the Berlin Memorandum of 1876 did not commend itself to Mr. Disraeli, who still adhered to the traditional British policy of supporting Turkey against Russia.

During the anxious period that immediately preceded and directly followed the war between those Powers, Lord Rosebery in Parliament maintained the attitude of a vigilant critic of the Government. He scouted the suggestion of England taking up arms in defence of the Sultan, and declared that the time had come for releasing ourselves from the engagements of the Treaty of 1856. The fall of Plevna and the advance of Russian troops on Constantinople was followed by the entrance of the Dardanelles by the British fleet on 28 January (it withdrew the next day to Besika Bay), and by an order calling out the Reserve. These events, which led to the resignation of Lord Carnarvon and Lord Derby, became the subject of keen criticism, and Lord Rosebery protested warmly against the mystery that was being practised as to the negotiations in which we were involved. He complained especially of the Secret Treaty signed by Lord Salisbury and Count Schuvaloff, and declared that no precedent could be found for British statesmen going to a Congress with the view of discussing great treaties and defending public law after they had secretly bound themselves to concede the stipulations which they had denounced and continued to denounce. The return of the British envoys from the Congress of Berlin in August, bringing 'Peace



with Honour,' gave Lord Rosebery an opening for a general attack on the Eastern policy of the Conservative Government.

Speaking at Aberdeen (18 October) he observed a careful moderation of tone which was in marked contrast with the impassioned oratory of Mr. Gladstone. Lord Rosebery declined to charge Ministers with having been 'deliberately reckless and wanton,' yet their policy had landed the country very much where recklessness and wantonness would have landed it. Their policy was a drifting policy. They talked about maintaining the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. What had become of it? They declared that the basis of their operations was the Treaty of 1856. Where was that treaty? The Congress of Berlin had effected no settlement at all. The Government had partitioned Turkey, had secured a doubtful portion of the soil for themselves, had abandoned Greece, and had incurred vast and indefinite responsibilities in Asia Minor. As to the acquisition of Cyprus, Lord Rosebery asserted that no defeat in battle could have been so prejudicial to our *prestige* as the manner in which it was effected. Hitherto, thanks to our elevated integrity of purpose and disinterestedness, we had been 'regarded as the police of Europe.' We could no longer keep up our moral reputation on the Continent. We had flaunted the Treaty of 1856 as our banner and motto, yet when it came to affect ourselves we treated it as so much waste paper. We had gained an unhealthy island, of which we had had enough, but we had lost in exchange that of which we could not have too much—the sympathy and respect of surrounding nations.

It would be unfair, perhaps, to take seriously all the



propositions laid down in a platform speech at an excited period, but Lord Rosebery is so well versed in the history of modern times that one would be glad to learn, on his authority, which was the time at which we were credited by European commentators with integrity of purpose and disinterested conduct, and at what precise date we were believed to possess the qualities that entitled us to be the 'police of Europe.' It is mere matter of fact that our 'moral reputation on the Continent' has always been of the worst, and never worse than when Mr. Gladstone was at the head of affairs. We have not deserved either the imputations cast upon us or the implied compliments to our political subtlety, but that is altogether a different question.

Lord Rosebery stood on firmer ground when he denounced our undertaking to defend the Sultan's Asiatic domains in return for certain reforms that he promised to institute. This news, he said, fell upon the nation like a thunderbolt. That, of course, was a rhetorical flourish. Nor was he quite justified in the interpretation which he placed on the arrangement. 'Turkish reforms,' he said, 'have been promised, with every sanctity of pledge, a score of times before. English ambassadors have called on the Sultan countless times, but no reforms have ever taken place. We arrive at this dilemma: either the Turkish reforms are to be undertaken by the Turks, in which case we know from experience that there will be no reforms at all, or they will be undertaken by Great Britain, by British officers, in which case it will mean the practical annexation of Asia Minor to this country.' As a matter of fact, the object of Lord Beaconsfield's policy, good or bad, was not to institute reforms in Asia Minor, either by British or Turkish officers, but to prevent the annexation of that

region by Russia under the pretext of carrying out reforms for which he believed that she cared nothing.

‘It was a mistake,’ exclaimed Lord Rosebery, ‘to treat Turkey as a Great Power. Turkey,’ he said, ‘was an impotence. But we treated it as a Great Power or as an impotence according to our own convenience.’ That Turkey is ‘an impotence’ is one of those declarations, made on the spur of the moment, which it is somewhat unpleasant for a statesman to recall when they happen to have been falsified by subsequent events. Yet the speaker was, perhaps, justified in calling attention to an aspect of the Eastern Question overlooked or obscured by politicians who, from ignorance or recklessness, were playing to the Jingo gallery of the period. Bereft of moral authority, and having proved itself incapable of self-reform, the Government of the Sultan seemed to contain none of the elements of vitality. In that sense it was, perhaps, admissible to speak of Turkey as an impotence, nor would many English politicians, at the end of the ‘Seventies or ‘Eighties, have ventured to predict that, by sheer military strength, it would survive, practically unimpaired, for another quarter of a century.

In order to show how far Lord Rosebery was prepared to go in support of Mr. Gladstone’s Eastern policy, it may be well to quote one somewhat startling sentence. Having pointed out that we had already sufficient responsibilities on our shoulders—in Canada, in Australia, in Africa, and in India—he asked whether his countrymen were prepared to undertake the government of another entire dominion. As taxpayers, would they provide the money? As men, would they shed their blood for the protection of Turkish rule in Asia? ‘We are told that it is not a matter of choice,’ he said; ‘that it

is necessary for the preservation of India. Sir, I believe it is no more necessary for the preservation of India than it is necessary that we should damage Spain in order that we should keep Gibraltar. But I do say this, that we may pay even too great a price for the preservation of India.' In thought, though not in style, this utterance may reasonably be compared with the famous 'Perish India!' that brought the late Professor Freeman into such deep opprobrium. It is, indeed, astonishing to find this line of argument adopted by the statesman who was to become the founder of Liberal Imperialism.

At this time, however, Lord Rosebery enjoyed the personal confidence and lived under the influence of Mr. Gladstone. It was natural to fight against that masterful spirit from the other side of the House of Commons, and there was always a handful of his followers who cherished a sense of detachment from their leader. But it was almost impossible to stand within daily range of his compelling genius and retain an independent judgment. Men of equal intellect, greater attainments, and character not inferior, fell under his sway. They might criticise, object, and even laugh, but he always had his way with them. It was no wonder that a young politician, as Lord Rosebery was, whose political education had lacked the robust training given in the House of Commons, should for a time have surrendered himself to Mr. Gladstone. It says something for the practical discernment of one who was still an apprentice, and not a specially industrious apprentice, to public life, that he promptly made up his mind that Mr. Gladstone was the one predestined leader of the Liberal party. His retirement could not be permanent. It was all very well to say that he had withdrawn of his own free will (which, by

the way, is not exactly true), and to plead the claims of Lord Hartington, who was 'bearing the heat and burden of the day.' Lord Rosebery soon realised that Mr. Gladstone meant to come back, and that nobody could stop him.

We all know now that in regard to the 'Bulgarian atrocities' agitation Mr. Gladstone was considerably misled by his generous enthusiasm for the cause of Greek Christianity; and our view of the different races and nationalities in South Eastern Europe has become more discriminating than it was during the 'Midlothian campaigns.' The exaggerations which then passed current on both sides have long been exploded. The fancy pictures which were drawn of the Turk, either as a demon of lust and cruelty, or as the exemplar of simple military virtues, would appear almost absurd to our fuller knowledge and colder judgment. But during the stormy months when Mr. Gladstone roused the country against the Beaconsfield policy it was impossible for a moderate man in either party to get a hearing. It is not without amusement, and a passing sense of shame, that a cool-headed person reads the excited declamations that were then poured out from every public platform.

It is not necessary to inquire what proportion of the blame should be respectively assigned to ignorance, mis-directed enthusiasm, and partisan intrigue. It is a question of personal temperament whether one is more disgusted by the cynical attitude of the Liberal politician who remarked, with a chuckle, that he 'had no idea the Bulgarian atrocities would turn out such a clinker,' or by the raucous folly of music-hall patriots. There is no need to condemn the excesses of the politicians when the whole people went mad in two different directions. In theory, of course, the responsibility lies with so-called leaders of public opinion,

but it may be laid down as generally true that a country has the sort of agitation which it deserves. And in the England of 1875 to 1885 the strength of popular conviction on foreign questions was nicely proportioned to ignorance of the facts and problems involved.

Whether it be thought that Mr. Gladstone did well or ill in the vehement crusade which he raised against the Ottoman rule in Europe, a large share of the credit or discredit must be given to Lord Rosebery. It was at the invitation of the young Peer that Mr. Gladstone came forward as Liberal candidate for Midlothian, and it was from Dalmeny that the momentous campaign was directed. The appeal that Mr. Gladstone made to the Scottish electors was, in effect, an appeal to the whole kingdom, and it was universally recognised that much more would be at stake on polling-day than the decision of a single constituency. From the local point of view, the political conflict was a struggle between the Buccleuch and the Rosebery interests, and in certain respects, though not in the expenditure of money, it recalled some of the historic elections in the pre-Reform period. Distinguished and popular as was the Primrose family in Midlothian, it could scarcely have claimed to contend on equal terms with the ancient and wealthy House that championed the cause of Scottish Conservatism; but the happy union which Lord Rosebery had formed on 20 March, 1878, with Miss Hannah de Rothschild made a material alteration in his position. By his close alliance with the richest and most powerful family in the world, Lord Rosebery passed from being a clever and rising politician to an established rank among the magnates of the United Kingdom.

The direct power of money in politics may have been



reduced by the various more or less effective laws against bribery and corruption. But its indirect authority has undergone a more than corresponding augmentation. In the old days of 'rotten boroughs' and the undisguised exercise of personal patronage, it was comparatively easy for the *cadet* of a great house—even for a son of the people, if he had found a powerful supporter—to climb to the highest places in the State. At the present time, so keen is the competition among capable adventurers, and so deep-rooted is the popular distrust of men who may be charged with personal objects not of the highest order, that a man's independence of spirit is too commonly measured by the length of his purse. There are great persons in the country whom it would be invidious to name, but who inspire confidence simply because they have been raised by fortune above the suspicion of mercenary motives. There are other men equally honest, and, perhaps, more competent, who are heavily handicapped in public life because, conceivably, the hope of attaining the salary of a Minister might help to influence their Parliamentary action. In most cases the unuttered imputation is, probably, quite unjust. Yet it cannot be questioned that the uncertainty of Mr. Disraeli's financial position was a severe drawback in his early career, and that Mr. Gladstone, though never a rich man, was placed at a certain advantage when he became owner of Hawarden. Apart from this consideration, there is, in the possession of great wealth, a certain glamour which affects the imagination of all classes. Before 1878 Lord Rosebery was a politician who might reasonably hope to be included in the next Liberal Administration. But after marriage he became one of the few happy personages whose refusal of office would be a disappointment to the statesman charged with the duty of forming a Government.



### CHAPTER III

Liberal foreign policy—General Election of 1880—Mr. Gladstone's second Administration—Lord Rosebery's position—His relations with Scottish Liberals—At the Home Office—His resignation—Scottish administration.

It is one of the paradoxes of contemporary politics that the statesman who has most earnestly pleaded for continuity in foreign policy, and whose most distinctive achievement is to have founded a school of Imperialist Liberals, was closely associated with Mr. Gladstone throughout the period when his conduct of our external affairs was equally vacillating and unsuccessful. It is not necessary here to pass judgment on such incidents as the retrocession of the Transvaal, the evacuation of Kandahar, the *imbroglio* in Egypt, the series of disasters in the Soudan, and the mismanagement that nearly involved us in war with Russia. In each case it is possible for an impartial historian to discover reasons for modifying the popular verdict of the hour, nor can it be denied that Conservative critics made insufficient allowance for the special difficulties under which the Liberal Administration was labouring. Now, however, when we are able to look back upon the events of those five years with some approach to a spirit of detachment, it is admitted, even by party apologists, that the general result was injurious both to the interests and the reputation of Great Britain. It is, no doubt, unfair to charge Mr. Gladstone with indifference to the welfare and advancement

of the Empire, but even his expansive intellect and wide sympathies had their limitations. Apart from the fortunes of the Greek Christians in South-Eastern Europe, his thoughts were preoccupied with the dramatic and always anxious changes in the Irish Question, with the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer, and with an embittered agitation against the House of Lords. Never until the crisis had assumed a dangerous phase does he seem to have concentrated his prodigious powers on any of the great foreign problems with which his Government was confronted.

However this may have been, it is certainly wrong to charge Mr. Gladstone with anything resembling public cowardice, or even with shrinking from what he regarded as a just war—e.g. against Turkey. It would not, perhaps, be easy to give a more precise definition of his attitude in foreign policy than his own explanation contained in one of the speeches delivered in his second Midlothian campaign. In reply to the statement that if the Liberals should come into power the destinies of the country would be ruled by the Manchester School, he declared that it had never ruled the foreign policy of the country—‘Never during a Conservative Government, and never especially during a Liberal Government.’ Disclaiming any intention of speaking slightly of the Manchester School or the Peace Party, he ventured to point out their ‘great and serious error.’ It was a respectable, even a noble error. ‘Abhorring all selfishness of policy, friendly to freedom in every country of the earth, attached to the modes of reason, and detesting the ways of force, this Manchester School—the Peace Party—has sprung prematurely to the conclusion that wars may be considered as having closed their melancholy and miser-

able history, and that the affairs of the world may henceforth be conducted by methods more adapted to the dignity of man, more suited both to his strength and weakness, less likely to lead him out of the ways of duty, to stimulate his evil passions, to make him guilty before God of inflicting misery on his fellow-creatures. But, gentlemen, no Government of this country could ever accede to the management and control of affairs without finding that that dream of a paradise on earth was rudely dispelled by the shock of experience. However we may detest war—and you cannot detest it too much—there is no war except one—the war for liberty—that does not contain in it elements of corruption as well as of misery, that are deplorable to recollect and to consider—but, however deplorable they may be, they are among the necessities of our condition; and there are times when justice, when faith, when the welfare of mankind require a man not to shrink from the responsibility of undertaking them.'

This fine passage—which, in the abstract, should satisfy the most uneasy patriotism—expresses the spirit with which Mr. Gladstone believed himself to be animated in his dealings with foreign Powers. But the application of these unexceptionable principles was, it is generally confessed, almost in every instance unfortunate. Without raising the question whether the 'magnanimity' claimed by Mr. Gladstone in regard to the Convention of Pretoria did not inflict a heavy blow on our prestige throughout the Colonies, it cannot be disputed that the unrest which it brought about in South Africa was the parent stock of the war that broke out less than twenty years afterwards. It is equally certain that the failure to relieve Gordon led eventually to the sanguinary operations conducted by Lord Kitchener

for the reconquest of the Soudan. Nor is it mere matter of conjecture that the timidity which, rightly or wrongly, was believed to account for the evacuation of Kandahar was followed by an overbearing attitude on the part of the Czar's Government, and thus led to the nearly fatal dispute over Penjdeh, by which we were brought to the verge of war in a case where our right was something worse than doubtful. Such have been some of the demonstrable results of the Gladstone Government's policy in 1880-1885. Nor is it, perhaps, out of place to remark that, by one of the many ironies of history, the Cabinet which in recent times has been most distinctively non-Imperialist unconsciously paved the way for some of the most important acquisitions of the British Empire. It was under Mr. Gladstone that we first made good our footing in the valley of the Nile. From the indecisive action that led to the breaking-up of the Anglo-French Condominium followed the series of diplomatic negotiations and administrative measures which have won for us, almost against our will, a dominating, if somewhat anomalous, position in Egypt. Similarly, the abandonment of the Soudan at a time when we held no recognised status in that region has been rectified by the establishment of a no longer challenged ascendancy. Again, it was under Mr. Gladstone that the events took place which led to the annexation of Burmah. Finally, it was by his policy that the seed was sown—sown amid tares—which eventually bore fruit in a consolidated South Africa. It was, indeed, the fate of an essentially pacific and home-keeping Administration to leave a legacy of troubles which made it the duty, as well as the right, of subsequent Cabinets to increase our responsibilities, and extend our frontiers, both in Asia and Africa. It is,

therefore, a pious duty of the Imperialist to deal gently with the mistakes and oversights of a period which presented itself to contemporary judgment in a somewhat inglorious light ; and Unionists in particular are bound to remember that, for any blunders which may have been committed by the Cabinet, a far greater share of censure belongs to the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain than to Lord Rosebery.

It was mainly on foreign policy that Lord Rosebery, in 1880, challenged the opinion of the country while the General Election was still in progress. At Glasgow, on 29 March, he repudiated the idea that Lord Beaconsfield would be more highly esteemed than Mr. Gladstone by the European Powers, and defined the foreign policy of the Liberal party. Its watchword would be 'the cause of England, peace and freedom throughout the world.' By peace he did not mean peace at any price. By freedom he did not mean licence. By England he did not mean 'these two islands.' He meant 'the great Empire throughout the world, which we are as proud of as any Tory can be—which we will maintain even with our blood, if necessary, but which we will not recklessly increase at the cost of the people of England.' At Edinburgh, again, on 31 March, he argued in the same vein, and combated the idea that Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern policy had restored England to her proper place in the councils of Europe. On this point he made a characteristic sally. It was said by Napoleon, he remarked, that we were a nation of shopkeepers. That reproach had vanished, because under the Tory Government our trade had vanished too. But perhaps it might be said some day that we were a nation of pettifoggers—going into the councils of Europe with secret agreements



with foreign Powers and with little terminable leases of foreign islands that did not belong to us, and which we had managed to filch from the general scramble.

Within a week Mr. Gladstone was returned as member for Midlothian by a majority of 211 votes, and Lord Rosebery had won his first victory over the local influence of the House of Buccleuch. It was as much a triumph for the young Peer as for the veteran statesman, nor did Lord Rosebery seek to disguise his exultation. With pardonable exaggeration he declared that that constituency had been chosen as the central battlefield of the great contest that was being waged. The battle had not been fought between Whig and Tory, Liberal and Conservative. It was the battle of Constitutional Government and of oppressed nationalities throughout the world. The boast had this much truth in it, that Mr. Gladstone's speeches in Scotland had been almost universally taken by the Liberal party throughout the country as the statement of its policy, and that much more turned on the result of the Midlothian polling than the maintenance or loss of that seat by the Conservative party. But it should, perhaps, be mentioned that Mr. Gladstone had not been so confident of success that he could afford to neglect insuring himself against defeat. He was also candidate for Leeds, a safe constituency, which returned him by a large majority. The precaution was necessary, since, if he had failed to obtain a seat before the meeting of the new Parliament, his claim to succeed Lord Beaconsfield might have been successfully called into question. His victory in Midlothian was the more important because it had not been counted upon as certain, and he was proportionately indebted to the supporter who had worked so indefatigably for their common purpose.



Nor was Mr. Gladstone chary in his acknowledgment. Five days after his return from Midlothian he wrote to Lord Rosebery that the moral effect had surpassed all their hopes. The feeling until it was over was so fastened on it that it was almost like one of those occasions of old when the issue of battle was referred to single combat. 'The great merit of it, I apprehend, lay in the original conception, which I take to have been yours, and to overshadow even your operations towards the direct production of the result. But one thing it cannot overshadow in my mind; the sense of the inexpressible aid and comfort derived day by day from your considerate ever-watchful care and tact.' A similar tribute having been paid to Lady Rosebery, the writer went on to say that he should feel profoundly ashamed of the burdens laid on his hosts unless he had seen how truly they were borne in the spirit which alone makes all burdens light. 'It is a very pleasant subject of reflection to me that the riveting effect of companionship in a struggle like this does not pass away with the struggle itself, but abides.'

The activity which Lord Rosebery threw into this memorable contest—perhaps the most strenuous period, though interrupted by a serious illness, in his public career—had not passed without hostile comment. Undoubtedly he had strained the rule of Parliamentary etiquette—it rests on no basis of binding law—which forbids Peers to take part in elections for the House of Commons. But he made light of such criticisms, and quoted, with humorous gusto, the remark of a Conservative Minister that when the subject of Peers' interference in Parliamentary elections was mentioned the name of Lord Rosebery always occurred to his mind. It was, perhaps, not inconsistent that a member of the Upper

House who had so strenuously advocated some modification of its hereditary privileges in regard to legislation should, by way of compensation, rebel against what he considered an antiquated restriction.

It is not necessary to tell over again the story—which has been related with half a dozen variants according to the narrator's point of view—of the negotiations that resulted in Mr. Gladstone being sent for by the Queen. The final meeting of Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet was held on April 21st, and on the evening of the 23rd Mr. Gladstone had kissed hands as Prime Minister. Those were the happy days of small Cabinets, but the task of selection among qualified aspirants to the places of higher dignity was proportionately more difficult. Mr. Gladstone had to contend with a special embarrassment, since the relations between the Moderate Liberal and Radical wings of the party were far from cordial. The admission of Mr. Chamberlain (Board of Trade) and the temporary exclusion of Sir Charles Dilke were the result of an arrangement between those two gentlemen and Mr. Gladstone. This, with the appointment of Mr. Bright as Chancellor of the Duchy, was accepted as partial compensation to the Nonconformist Radicals for the appointment of their particular *bête noir*, Mr. W. E. Forster, as Chief Secretary. All the other Cabinet offices—unless Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, was to be counted among the Radicals—went to Moderate Liberals: Lord Granville (Foreign Office), Lord Selborne (Lord Chancellor), Lord Spencer (President of the Council), Lord Hartington (India), Lord Kimberley (Colonies), Lord Northbrook (Admiralty), Mr. Childers (War Office), Duke of Argyll (Privy Seal), and Mr. J. G. Dodson (Local

Government). Mr. Gladstone himself became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

It will be observed that most of the chief Departments of State had been placed under the control of Peers, since the Board of Trade and Local Government Board were considered offices of secondary importance and dignity. There would have been even more discontent in the party than was actually aroused by the distribution of places in the Cabinet if another member of the Upper House had been added to Mr. Gladstone's list, and this, no doubt, was one of the reasons why Lord Rosebery refused the honour which, it is understood, was placed within his reach. In a private letter printed in Mr. Morley's 'Life of Gladstone' there is a sufficient indication of the incident. 'One admirable man, with intrepid *naïveté*,' wrote the Prime Minister, 'proposed himself for the Cabinet, but was not admitted; another no less admirable was pressed to enter, but felt that he could be more useful as an independent member, and declined—an honourable transaction repeated by the same person on another occasion later.'

The omission of Lord Rosebery was a surprise to some of the best-informed commentators. The immense services he had rendered to Scottish Liberalism, and in particular to the Prime Minister, would, no doubt, have entitled him to a high place if he had cared to press his claim—if, indeed, he had not voluntarily stood aside. The reason which he assigned for refusal was his want of experience in administration, and it was this ground which the Prime Minister had himself taken in order to explain his hesitation as to admitting Mr. Chamberlain within the Cabinet.

Exempt from the cares of Office, Lord Rosebery did not trouble himself in the first year of Mr. Gladstone's Adminis-

tration to take any active part in Parliamentary debates, but as President of the Greek Committee took the chair in December at a meeting called to advocate the claims of the Hellenic race in Epirus and Thessaly. He lent no countenance, however, to the firebrand advice of the enthusiasts who wished to promote another war of Liberation. In June, 1881, Lord Fife, in the House of Lords, brought forward, in an emphatic fashion, the Scottish demand for a separate Ministry, and this was supported by Lord Rosebery. The proposal was put aside for the time, but, in recognition of his unwavering advocacy of the interests of the Northern Kingdom, he was pressed—and consented—to become Under-Secretary at the Home Office, in order that he might give the Government the benefit of his special knowledge of Scottish affairs. The appointment was not represented as a fitting reward for his political services, or as worthy of his abilities. Nevertheless it appears to have given satisfaction to his friends, who looked on it merely as a first step to high advancement. It may here be pointed out that, even at those periods in his career when he was least in favour with the great body of the Liberal party, he has never lost the confidence and regard of his countrymen. This is a factor which his rivals and adversaries must never forget to take into account. In this respect he presents an interesting parallel to a statesman with whom, perhaps, he has nothing else in common. Behind the general reputation which Mr. Chamberlain enjoys in Great Britain there is the keen and always unabated enthusiasm of the solid and populous wedge of central England which is known as the Birmingham district, and the ex-Secretary of State for the Colonies, amid the cares of Office or the distractions of controversy, has never omitted to keep himself in close and

constant communication with his political base. He has always been loyal to Birmingham, and in return Birmingham has always been faithful to him and proud of him. Similarly, Lord Rosebery, though he has no constituents to woo, and, more from natural preference than from prudence or gratitude, has never allowed the duties of statesmanship, the attractions of sport, or the calls of Society, to interrupt, for any length of time, his intimate association with his own people in Scotland.

Like Mr. Chamberlain, he has been repaid in undeviating and inflexible support—even against fellow-Liberals who are fellow-countrymen. Yet it may be conjectured that many of his Scottish admirers, especially those who are most closely associated with a strict type of Protestantism, regard him in their hearts as standing in need of a certain indulgence. He is, as it were, a spoiled child, and they pardon his love of racing in much the same spirit as they overlook the amorous irregularities of their great national poet. In each case their toleration has, perhaps, been influenced by an unconfessed pride in the success of their brilliant prodigals. If Lord Rosebery has gone upon the Turf, he has almost made a habit of winning the Derby, just as Burns, when he departed from the Simple Life of his time, became one of the lions of the London season. Justly proud of their own land and people as Scottish patriots are, they are intensely flattered when the merits of their countrymen are recognised in the southern capital.

Men of this way of thinking saw nothing derogatory in the statesman whom they looked upon as destined for the highest office accepting a minor post in Mr. Gladstone's Government, especially as the new recruit, with his unflinching tact, described himself amongst his own people as



a 'backstairs Minister for Scotland.' The political position of the Under-Secretary was, of course, already very different from that of the ordinary young Peer on his promotion. Having established himself with Lady Rosebery at Lansdowne House, he made it one of the chief meeting-places for Liberals of every denomination, and the frequent presence of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, as intimate friends of the host and hostess, rendered the gatherings in Berkeley Square one of the inner forces of the party.

Having assumed the responsibilities of Office, Lord Rosebery did not neglect the duty of frequent appearance on public platforms. With the Irish policy of the Government—the Land Act, the Coercion Act, the imprisonment of Mr. Parnell and the other 'suspects,' and their subsequent release under the Treaty of Kilmainham—he thoroughly identified himself, and was rewarded, wherever he went, by a sympathetic and cordial reception. In the House of Lords also he was a fairly constant attendant, and his personal popularity, combined with ready speech, helped the Government, so far as possible, in reconciling an adverse majority of Peers to the policy of a Government which had already been weakened in the Upper House by the revolt of the Moderate Liberalism represented by the late Duke of Argyll. Neither at this nor any subsequent period of his career is it easy to say whether, in domestic policy, Lord Rosebery can more properly be claimed as an adherent of the advanced or the more timid wing of the party. Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were so firmly concentrated on the Reform side of their programme that they left themselves little time or energy for social legislation, but with such projects as they were enabled to bring forward Lord Rosebery manifested a vivid and active



sympathy. Outside the sphere of his Parliamentary work he was associated with various schemes for the non-political advancement of the condition of the people. Though it would be difficult to fix upon any distinctively Socialistic proposal to which he has lent his support, his subsequent election as Chairman of the first London County Council showed that he had been regarded by the Progressives as one of their own people, and that his position was regarded as essentially different from that either of the high and dry Whigs or the Radicals who derived their inspiration from Bentham and John Mill.

In the early 'Eighties, however, it should be remembered that, although Mr. Gladstone's agrarian legislation for Ireland had alienated a certain group of Liberals, his Government still included such 'orthodox' economists and cautious politicians as the present Duke of Devonshire, the late Lord Northbrook, and Lord Spencer, while the most extreme men in the House of Commons had not yet displayed any tendency to go beyond the individualist doctrines of Philosophic Radicalism. The spirit of young Liberalism was considered to be well personified by Mr. John Morley, and at a banquet held in the early part of 1882 Lord Rosebery proposed his health as fitly symbolising the future of the Liberal party. He seized the occasion, however, to insist upon the duty of union, and expressed his hope that, if the party remained at peace within itself, and at the same time retained popular sympathy, it must always predominate in this country. Powerful as the Liberals still were on paper, unshaken as was their majority in the House of Commons, the signs of coming dissension were already visible to those who looked below the surface. Partly through Mr. Gladstone's master-

ful genius, and partly through the unexampled anarchy among the Conservatives, they were enabled to carry on the government of the country till 1885. But even the reticent pages of Mr. Gladstone's biographer show that the gossip of the period scarcely exaggerated the dissensions that prevailed within the Cabinet. The extremists who could not have their way in directing the councils of the party were at least able to make life uncomfortable for those who were identified with the established authority.

Lord Rosebery was among their first victims. It is one of the failings that impair his usefulness in the rude conflicts of English politics that he is unduly sensitive to pin-pricks. Perhaps because he never went through the daily discipline of the House of Commons, which indurates the cuticle against minor flagellation, or even renders it a stimulating experience, he is impatient of vicious criticism. Because he was Mr. Gladstone's intimate friend, and suspected of exercising influence over the autocratic mind of his Leader, it was resolved to give him a fall. Complaint was made that the Under-Secretary of the Home Office was not a member of the House of Commons and amenable to public criticism. The absurd cry was kept up with sufficient pertinacity to induce Lord Rosebery to resign a post that was not worth his keeping, and which he thought it undignified to fight for. Indeed, his original acceptance of the duties had been something of a personal sacrifice. Probably he made a mistake in giving way, and he afterwards stated that he had made up his mind never again to retire from a position merely on the ground of his being a Peer.

There appears to be no justification, in spite of the dissensions that afterwards broke out between Lord Rose-

bery and Sir William Harcourt, for the suggestion that the Under-Secretary had taken offence at anything said or done by his Chief at the Home Office. The statement was expressly contradicted, both by Sir William Harcourt and by Lord Rosebery, in language that passed beyond the conventions of the perfunctory official *dementi*. 'It is an entirely untrue statement, which has not a colour of foundation of any kind or sort,' said Sir William. 'I know what you must be feeling under so undeserved an innuendo,' wrote Lord Rosebery to him, 'but I am quite as indignant as you are.'

It was explained that the arrangement under which Lord Rosebery had taken office was never intended to be permanent. That, no doubt, was correct. Lord Rosebery had only gone to the Home Office to bridge over the period until the Government should establish a separate Department under a Secretary for Scotland. Nevertheless, the sudden termination of this stop-gap scheme had not been contemplated. It was brought about by a little intrigue that might have been defeated if Lord Rosebery had possessed the requisite Parliamentary temperament or thought the prize worth the struggle. But he had not yet shaken off the proud indolence discerned in his boyhood by the Eton tutor who remarked that "Dalmeny" was one of those who desired *palmam sine pulvere*—in this case the dust raised by partisan animus.

His severance from the Government was not taken to indicate any modification of his political attitude, and the Prime Minister, in reply to a formal and significant expression of regret on the part of the General Committee of the Scottish Liberal Club, intimated his hope that before long Lord Rosebery's abilities might 'again be turned to

account in active public service.' As a further demonstration of the undiminished confidence reposed in him by his countrymen, he was presented (July, 1883) with the freedom of the City of Edinburgh, and, by way of making a suitable return, stated a strong case for the establishment of a Scottish Local Government Board under a Scottish Minister; this was the object of a measure, already introduced by the Government, in the framing of which Lord Rosebery had taken an active part. It was crowded out, however, by the presence of more urgent and contentious business, and, though further efforts were made to carry it, it was not to be numbered among the legislative achievements of Mr. Gladstone's Administration. On the first occasion it was introduced too late in the Session to stand any chance of success. On the second it was abandoned at the annual 'slaughter of the innocents,' and on the third it was put down for Second Reading on the very day on which the Government announced their intention of resigning, having been defeated in the House of Commons by a majority of twelve on the Finance Bill.

## CHAPTER IV

Colonial tour—Agricultural labourer's enfranchisement—Reform agitation—Lords and Commons—Lord Rosebery's plea—Appeal for Moderation—The crisis solved—Lord Rosebery and reform of the House of Lords.

BEING released from administrative duties, and a little disgusted, perhaps, at the treatment he had received, Lord Rosebery spent some of his leisure on an extended foreign tour in the company of Lady Rosebery. After a few weeks in the United States they sailed for Australia, where he met with a hearty welcome. His aspirations after social reform appealed to the advanced democratic sentiments of the Colonists, while his taste for sport made him popular with a class that cares little for politics.

It is interesting to notice that, before Home Rule had been adopted by any considerable group in the Liberal party, he used language as to local self-government which, rightly or wrongly, was interpreted in Victoria as signifying willingness to 'ease the work of the Imperial Parliament.' Nor should it be forgotten, amid rival claims for 'the discovery of the British Empire,' that, in 1884, at a public banquet in Melbourne, he expressed hopes and adumbrated a policy almost as advanced as those of Tory Imperialists. He contemptuously dismissed the suggestion that the then contemplated Federation of Australia, on Canadian lines, might lead to separation from the Mother Country. He could give no logical explanation, he admitted, of the bond that kept the Empire together. The arrangement between



Great Britain and the Colonies was not a compact or a civil contract. It was a marriage of the affections, or it was nothing at all. The prophecy had been made that the connexion would not survive a war. Lord Rosebery was more sanguine. He believed it would survive, other things being equal, so long as the home country and the daughter country were allowed to preserve their positions of mutual independence and self-respect. He had faith in the union of races—by which he meant the community of memories, of work, of object, and of aim. He had always hoped that this communion of races would exist so long as his life lasted, but since his visit to Australia it would become a passion with him to preserve that union and to serve that country of Australia, of which he could never have any but the most happy and pleasant memories.

After all allowance is made for the natural exuberance of rhetoric at a public welcome of this kind, the utterance is sufficiently remarkable as coming from the intimate friend and private counsellor of the Statesman who was charged, above all his predecessors, with neglect and indifference towards the duties and privileges of Empire.

During Lord Rosebery's absence abroad the Radical party had been getting up steam for the long-promised and often-deferred agitation for the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourer. It was known that no effectual resistance would be offered in the House of Commons to the County Franchise Bill which Mr. Gladstone introduced on the last day of February, 1884, and the Third Reading was carried before the end of June. The only question was how it would be treated in the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury, who had now come forward as Leader of the Conservative party, but whose authority was by no means unquestioned,



announced, before the Bill had been presented to Parliament, that he should oppose it in the Upper House. But it was far from certain that he would be supported by the whole party. The attitude of the Tory Democrats, a force of unknown dimensions, was not to be calculated by the ordinary laws of political reason, and besides them there were among the Conservatives a good many politicians who, from timidity or fatalism, were ready to accept, or not willing to fight against, what they regarded as inevitable. By playing on the intrigue of one section and the fears of the other, it was hoped by some of the Radicals that the House of Lords might be deterred from exercising its undoubted right of throwing out the Bill, and thus forcing the Prime Minister either to accept defeat or dissolve Parliament and appeal on that issue to the verdict of an unreformed electorate. Either alternative would be equally inconvenient to the Government, and, if possible, they were determined to detach a sufficient number of Peers from the policy announced by Lord Salisbury.

It would have been a comparatively simple matter to get up a cry against the Peers if they came forward as out-and-out opponents of enfranchisement. Lord Salisbury had chosen his ground with a more subtle judgment. It was impossible, he said, to pass a Franchise Bill without a Redistribution Bill. This would but abolish one anomaly and create another. Nor would it do for the Government to pass a Franchise Bill in 1884 and promise a Redistribution Bill in 1885. If the Peers consented to the first measure they would be powerless to have any voice as to the nature of the second. The Government would be able, if the Lords objected to their Redistribution Bill, to appeal to constituencies which they had just flooded with new voters.

No, if the Government wished to dissolve, let them dissolve on the present electorate. Those were Lord Salisbury's terms to Mr. Gladstone. To the Franchise Bill as it stood the Conservatives would not say either Yes or No. They must first be shown the Redistribution Scheme.

It was easier to denounce Lord Salisbury's attitude than to change it. All the paraphernalia of popular agitation was brought into operation—platform speeches, pamphlets, processions, and demonstrations. For a time public feeling ran very high, and so sincere were the misgivings among many moderate-minded politicians at the prospect of a conflict between the two Houses that some of the Liberals, whose allegiance had been shaken by the Irish policy of the Government and the mismanagement of affairs in South Africa, in Egypt, and the Soudan, were beginning to rally again to Mr. Gladstone. It was known that such Peers as the Duke of Argyll and Lord Cowper would exert their influence in the House of Lords towards averting a rupture, and the result of their mediatory action was somewhat uncertain. From a different point of view Lord Rosebery was working towards the same end. On several occasions he had come forward as the advocate of internal and voluntary reform within the House of Lords, and on 20 June, within a few days of the Third Reading Debate on the Franchise Bill in the House of Commons, moved in the House of Lords that a Select Committee should be appointed to consider the best means of promoting its efficiency. In spite, however, of the imminent quarrel between the two branches of the Legislature, the proposal was treated as being of an academical character, and rejected, after some not unfriendly remarks from Lord Granville and Lord Salisbury, by a two-to-one majority—seventy-seven against thirty-eight.

On 26 June the note was sounded for a grand attack by Mr. Gladstone, who took the opportunity of the Third Reading Debate in the House of Commons to utter a solemn warning to the Peers. Ministers, he said, were anxious to avert a collision between the two Houses. It would open up far more serious problems than any he remembered since the first Reform Bill, and, though he had no fear as to the result, he looked forward to the consequences with the gravest apprehension. His warning was openly derided by Mr. Balfour, who declared that it would no longer be worth lifting a finger to defend the House of Lords if it were to be considered incapable of giving its opinion on a great constitutional question.

It was now evident that the more vigorous section of the Conservatives would follow Lord Salisbury in defying the Radical agitation, and that a sufficient majority was ensured in the House of Lords to reject the Bill. When it came up for Second Reading Lord Cairns proposed what was practically a negative motion. While the Peers would be ready to concur in 'a well-considered and complete scheme for the extension of the Franchise,' they would not consent to a Bill that did not provide for 'the full and free representation of the people,' and was 'not provided with any adequate security that it should not come into operation except as an entire scheme.'

Issue was now joined on the lines laid down by Lord Salisbury. The cautious attitude of the Duke of Argyll and Lord Cowper was repudiated by so moderate a politician as Lord Carnarvon. He was scornful of the 'monotonous, stupid, and ridiculous threats' uttered against the Lords, and did not believe that the country would resent their rejecting the Bill. The political clubs might

be angry, but it was to the decision of the country that the Lords wished to refer the question. He taunted the Liberal Government with shrinking from appealing to the 'source of their strength,' and intimated that they were deterred from dissolving Parliament by the fear of being condemned for their foreign policy.

Lord Rosebery took the ground that, on the confession of Conservative Peers, the Bill deserved to be accepted, yet they were resolved to throw it out. But they would not defeat the measure, they could only retard it. The demand for a simultaneous measure of Redistribution could not be granted, because, in view of the state of business in the House of Commons during the past few years, it would be impossible to pass a Redistribution Bill in connexion with a Franchise Bill. Every member whose seat would be affected might raise a distinct discussion on that point, and the opportunities for obstruction (which had recently been reduced to a system in the House of Commons) would be unlimited. On the representation of Ireland, of London, and of Scotland, on the representation of minorities, and on whether the number of members should be increased or retained at its present figure, it would be possible to raise a discussion 'on the first breath of a measure of Redistribution. Besides, the question of linking it to the Franchise Bill had already been settled in the House of Commons, when the amendment moved by Lord John Manners was defeated by a majority of 130.' The fears of the Opposition that Ministers, having carried the Franchise Bill, would break their promise to bring in a Redistribution Bill in the following Session, implied an insult to the Government. If such a breach of faith were committed, he and half the members on his side of the House would join in a Vote of Censure.

Passing to more dangerous ground, Lord Rosebery sought to allay the irritation caused in some of his hearers' minds by the language in which Mr. Gladstone had spoken of the action of that House. They regarded his words as a menace. This, Lord Rosebery said, was a misunderstanding. Mr. Gladstone's speech was meant in 'a strictly Conservative sense.' Those who had the privilege and honour of his acquaintance knew the 'essentially Conservative basis on which his political opinions rested,' and Lord Rosebery ventured to assert that this last utterance was intended to avert a collision between the two Houses. Very few Conservatives at the time accepted Lord Rosebery's assurance, but it was amply borne out by the subsequent course of this agitation and also when a similar crisis arose in 1894. On both occasions Mr. Gladstone uttered solemn words of warning—hoping that the Lords would give way—and on both occasions, when they held out, he declined, in spite of strong Radical pressure, to place himself at the head of a movement against them.

While admitting the indefeasible right of the Peers to reject the Bill, Lord Rosebery argued that they had no moral justification for rejecting it on Second Reading or for delaying it. Referring to the large muster of Peers who had come up to vote against the measure, he asked what the country would think when it came to analyse the division list, and found that the large majority was made up of members who did not habitually attend the House? If they rejected the Bill this time, would they do so a second time? Perhaps it would be found that the army had melted away. But if the measure were thrown out a second time and a Dissolution were forced on the Government, there would be in the country 'an agitation of a violent and



terrible kind.' And, in the end, if they might judge by the experience of 1867, a much stronger measure of reform would be carried. Was it of the interest of the Conservative party or of the House of Lords that they were thinking? A connoisseur the other day had paid £4,500 for an ancient, elaborate, costly horn. That would be a very bad instrument for poking the fire with. But that was precisely what they were then about to do. They were using an institution of the most ancient and valuable kind to poke up a conflagration for which it was wholly unsuited and of which he could not pretend to see the limits. They were setting themselves against two millions of persons desirous of the vote—a few hundreds against a host as large as that of Xerxes, and without the singular advantages that Thermopylæ conferred upon its little band of defenders.

The conclusion of the speech was an elaborate appeal to the statesmanship and prudence of the Lords Temporal and Spiritual.

If the people of this country be with you you are justified in the course you are now taking. If the House of Commons does not represent the people of this country, you are justified in the course you are going to take to-night. If the three millions of voters who already possess the suffrage are anxious to preserve the artificial legal distinction between the town and the country, then, my lords, you are justified in the course you are going to take to-night. If the two million non-electors who are reckoning on the promises and the votes of the House of Commons, and upon the practical unanimity with which the Bill has been passed, feel that they are not entitled to the vote which you are going to deny them, and are prepared to kiss the rod with which you chastise them, you are justified in the course you are going to take to-night.

But, my lords, is it on such hopes and on such prognostications that you are about to face the storms of popular prejudice

and popular indignation? The crisis is grave. We stand by a precipice if we are not hurrying to it, and I cannot console myself with any of those honeyed expressions about our authority and our standing in the country which afford so much consolation to the noble Earl. I see a situation as grave as the unwisdom of a Leader and the strength of a party in this House are able to produce. I do think that when we consider what we have at stake to-night, we have a right to appeal to the more independent members of this House. I do not pretend to say that we have at stake the existence of this House, because I do not think so; but we have at stake that without which existence is not valuable or tolerable—the weight and authority which are given by wise decisions and by sympathy with the nation—that nation for which we legislate and which governs us. I venture to appeal to the independent members of this House to pause before they vote for the amendment of the noble Earl (Cairns). I was delighted with the defence of the cross-benches which came from the noble Duke (Argyll), who has sat so long during his Parliamentary career on the front bench, and I am quite willing to endorse all that he said. But I appeal to these crowded cross-benches which are always asking to be enlarged. I appeal to them—to those who can regard politics without being affected by mere temporary party prejudices—I appeal to them to pause before they endorse the action of the noble Earl.

But, my lords, if I may make another appeal, it would be to those right reverend prelates who in this House represent a faith, and who preach a gospel, which is not merely a message of peace and goodwill to men, but which is also the highest and purest theory of democracy which has yet been vouchsafed to men. I appeal to them to assist us in giving this great privilege to two millions of men, and I appeal to them to separate this House from the storms and anxieties that we must face if we pass this Resolution.

I do not say that I regard this Motion as a wanton one—wanton is too strong a word. I have no right, either from my standing or my age, to use such an expression. But I have the right to ask your lordships to pause on every consideration, public, private, and personal, which can influence an ancient

and illustrious Senate. I would ask you, in the interests of your Order, of your authority and of your Party, not to pass a Resolution which may strike a fatal blow at your existence.

The speech turned no votes—in the division only fifty-nine Peers supported the Government against three hundred and fifty-one—nor can Lord Rosebery have looked for any such result. It was in the highest degree improbable that any appreciable number of the members of the House would attend it without having made up their minds on an elementary question which they had enjoyed ample time to consider. Lord Rosebery's speech on this occasion has been given at some length, because it is a fairly representative, though not specially favourable, example of his Parliamentary style. It contained some telling passages, which lost none of their effect from the manner of delivery; but the argument is beaten too thin for an assembly of educated and more or less experienced politicians. In truth, Lord Rosebery was addressing the country rather than the Peers, and he is heard to best effect at Westminster when his tone is more conversational and his reasoning more condensed. It may also be objected that in the special appeal to the bishops he struck what many of his audience would consider a false note, and thus impaired the force of an eloquent peroration.

The importance of the speech, coming from a statesman not directly associated with the Government, was that it sufficiently identified the orator with the more advanced section of the Liberal party—in spite of a suggested proviso against the agitation which was being conducted against the hereditary Chamber—while it showed that he was still in the enjoyment of Mr. Gladstone's most intimate confidences.

It would be a tedious story to describe the subsequent movements of the party leaders. For a long time they were engaged in 'manœuvring for position' rather than preparing to join battle. The Liberals flatly declined to expose the text of the Redistribution Bill, which had been drafted by a small Government committee, while the Conservatives vowed that until they had seen it they could not permit the Franchise Bill to become law. The *impasse* had apparently become absolute, when the situation was suddenly relieved by the happy accident or indiscretion through which the full text of the draft scheme for Redistribution was published in 'The Standard.' After this, it was comparatively easy for the party managers to arrange terms of accommodation, and, in spite of certain stormy personal incidents, the crisis was resolved. The Redistribution Bill was introduced in the Lower, and the Franchise Bill was read a second time in the Upper House; but it was not till 12 June, 1885, that the final stages of the latter measure were concluded—after the Gladstone Government had ceased to exist.

Returning from this brief anticipation of events, we find that, not discouraged by the action of the Peers in their emphatic repudiation of his advice in regard to the Franchise Bill, Lord Rosebery continued his missionary work as a reformer of their House. In his motion for a Select Committee to inquire into and report on the whole question he had given definite form to his views. He complained that the existing House represented nothing except the Church, the Law, and the Hereditary Principle. He desired that it should include exemplars of Medicine, Science, Art, Literature, Commerce, and even Labour. He suggested also that India and the Colonies should be given

a more direct way of expressing their views, and he further proposed that the question of Life Peerages should be considered, and whether, on special occasions, the House should be empowered to consult persons who were not Peers.

This scheme—though some portions of it have since been tentatively carried into effect—found no favour at a time when excitable Radicals were threatening to destroy the whole fabric. After the temper had cooled down on both sides Lord Rosebery thought that he might renew his proposal with a better chance of success. Accordingly, he drew up a circular letter (dated December, 1884), which was addressed to many members of the House. In this brief document he simply asked to be placed in communication with any Peer who would express himself in favour of the general principle of the reform of the House of Lords without adopting any particular method, or accepting any of the views of the organiser of the movement. In this way Lord Rosebery hoped to bring about some sort of concerted action. The invitation, however, met with no response. One reason of this failure may be found in Lord Rosebery's close association with Mr. Gladstone—who at the time was generally, if erroneously, regarded as an enemy of the Upper House. Another reason may have been that the Peers, like the Commons, have a standard of their own for judging their colleagues, and very often the inner estimate of a public man differs widely from the popular opinion of him. Quite other factors than eloquence and administrative capacity are taken into account, and it sometimes happens that the men most powerful at Westminster or most influential in party councils are hardly known outside the walls of Parliament. If ever a reform of the House of



Lords be brought about from within, it will be done through the agency of some of those unobtrusive and, perhaps, not very clever persons who have acquired a reputation, not always deserved, for solid judgment and practical sagacity. Such a position had not been attained in 1884 by the brilliant—too brilliant—young Peer who was already reckoned in the running for the succession to Mr. Gladstone.

This peculiar kind of reputation, though keenly enjoyed by its possessors—who look with kindly toleration or superior contempt upon mere Ministers and leaders of public opinion—should be studiously avoided by every aspirant to the highest places in the State. Consistently, and sometimes in defiance of common prudence, Lord Rosebery has manifested his scorn of the average intelligence and the commonplace opinion. More than once he has fallen into a mistake frequently committed by men conscious of cleverness—he exaggerates the inferiority of second-rate persons. It is a dangerous challenge to declare war on dullards, and Lord Rosebery has been pursued by them—on both sides—ever since he became prominent in public life. The *Dêmos* that he has courted has been an abstract *Dêmos*, and he has credited it with those qualities in himself for which he has the greatest regard. This *Dêmos*, which has a certain existence in the intelligent and receptive spirit of the high-class Liberal working-man, has always appreciated the compliment, and will be faithful to him so long as he continues to stimulate and amuse it. His love for racing, his occasional disappearances from public life and apparent neglect of its duties, his seeming indifference to censure and reproof—these rank for virtues rather than vices in the eyes of a class who are much more men of the world than those who hold a somewhat higher rank in

society. They relish his rank, they do not dislike his wealth, while they admire his facile success in everything he has undertaken. He has the art of winning their sympathy because he speaks to them in such a way that they understand what he says, while he never makes them feel that he is talking down to them. At any moment, if he could appeal directly to the Liberal working-men, they would acclaim him as their chosen Leader. But besides them he has to reckon with a solid mass of middle-class opinion. This in the earlier period of his career he had almost won over. Undoubtedly it supported him during the closing years of Mr. Gladstone's second Administration.

## CHAPTER V

An Imperialist address—Occupation of Egypt—General Gordon's mission—Lord Rosebery at Epsom—Rejoins the Ministry—Defeat of Mr. Gladstone—Dissensions in the Cabinet—Lord Rosebery's supporters in Scotland—First reference to Home Rule—Recent developments of the Irish Question—Mutual suspicions and party competition—Mr. Parnell's attitude—General Election of 1885—Mr. Gladstone's adoption of Home Rule—Lord Rosebery's position—The first Salisbury Administration defeated—Mr. Gladstone's third Administration—Lord Rosebery Foreign Secretary—Liberal Imperialism—The 'Umbrella' speech.

THE quasi-official position which Lord Rosebery had re-established in the public mind by his speech on the Franchise Bill was strengthened by a visit that Mr. Gladstone paid at the end of August to his Midlothian constituents. This was part of the movement which had been planned for the intimidation of the Peers. Once again Lord Rosebery stood as local sponsor for the Prime Minister, and it was remarked that the young host was not less cordially greeted than the veteran statesman. A few days after his guest's departure Lord Rosebery delivered an address to the Trade Union Congress at Aberdeen, and took the opportunity of enlarging upon Imperial Federation. It should be borne in mind that Mr. Gladstone, to whom he had scarcely bidden adieu, was then at the height of the unpopularity caused by real or apparent neglect of our foreign and Colonial interests. Many of his supporters—through a mistake as to public feeling, for which they afterwards paid a heavy penalty—thought it necessary to assume

an indifference to which their Leader had never confessed. To the end of his days Mr. Gladstone did not admit that he had been an inefficient custodian of the Empire, nor did he lend countenance to what for convenience' sake must be called the Little England view of our responsibilities. Some of his most trusted colleagues, Lord Rosebery amongst them, were closely associated with the Imperial Federation League, and at all times, so far as language went, Mr. Gladstone paid extreme deference to Colonial sentiment. Nevertheless it is worthy of more than passing remark that Lord Rosebery should have selected such an audience and such an occasion for dwelling on a theme which had scarcely passed from the rank of amiable visions.

In the very fever of a great domestic agitation he told the Trade Unionists at Aberdeen that the question of Federation in the Empire was more important than the Franchise. Persons who are curious in the search for political parallels may be referred to the passage in which Lord Rosebery (in 1884) declared that the bond which united the various component parts of the Empire must either become stronger or weaker—it could not continue in its present somewhat indefinite form. It was most desirable, he maintained, that the bond should become stronger, and that the working classes, who made up the main population of our Colonial Empire, should place that important subject in their programme for early and serious consideration.

During part of the autumn Lord Rosebery was laid up in consequence of a fall from his horse, but in the early part of December he was entertained by the Liverpool Reform Club. Once again he dwelt on Imperial topics. He declared that no six months of his life had yielded him so much instruction and profit as his recent voyage round the

world. He insisted on the necessity for maintaining a strong Navy, and protested against any immediate evacuation of Egypt. We had duties to perform in that country. The first was to set up a stable Government there—a Government that could stand alone and make itself respected. A second duty was to take care that no foreign nation should afterwards occupy the position we might vacate. 'Whether there be two schools or not in the Liberal party on this question, there is only one opinion on this point—that no strong foreign nation should be permitted to occupy the great highway between our Indian and Colonial possessions and ourselves.'

At this time, it should be remembered, the opinion was generally held that we should be able at no distant date to fulfil our intention (and redeem our pledge) of arranging to terminate the occupation of Egypt. Even in the militant group of Conservatives there were but few who ventured to regard it as permanent. Lord Rosebery's declaration, therefore, marked the extreme point of then accepted Imperialism as regards Egypt proper.

Very different was the attitude of parties and public opinion as to our duty in the Soudan. The perplexing and dismal story of Gordon's mission has not yet been fully revealed. It is possible that the fuller light which may some day be forthcoming will relieve Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues from part of the blame with which they have been visited on account of their failure to rescue Gordon from perils incurred on a hopeless enterprise. Whether in any circumstances his life might have been saved is a question that cannot at present be answered. But there is no doubt that the apparent vacillations of the Government, their seeming lack of consistent purpose,



brought them into deep odium. The Conservatives, naturally, worked up a violent agitation, and, if Ministers had ever hoped to survive another Session, the prospect had vanished by the end of the year. In spite of the disunion and discontent that still prevailed in the Opposition, it was considered certain, by all cool-headed judges, that the General Election would result in Mr. Gladstone suffering a severe defeat—one that would probably lead, so it was said, to his final disappearance from public life.

The Liberal clubs, of course, did all that was possible to keep up the spirits of the party. They held meetings and passed resolutions of confidence in her Majesty's advisers, calling on them to persevere in the cause of domestic reform. One of these was brought forward—on 9 February, 1885, at the Epsom Liberal Club—specially adapted to the taste and public record of its most distinguished member, since it expressed sympathy with the public anxiety as to the fate of General Gordon, and insisted on 'the necessity of drawing closer the ties which unite Great Britain to her Colonies.' The address which Lord Rosebery gave was more significant than his audience understood. The announcement had not yet been made, but when he spoke he had received, and probably had accepted, Mr. Gladstone's invitation to rejoin the Government as Lord Privy Seal and First Commissioner of Works, with a seat in the Cabinet.

Speaking for the last time as a private and irresponsible person, he reminded his Epsom neighbours that on more than one occasion he had expressed the opinion that Ministers might have adopted a bolder and clearer course in regard to the Soudan. But they had been called upon to deal with a situation of unexampled difficulty. He

protested against the idea that the fall of Khartoum [the news of which was expected every day to reach London] should involve the fall of the Ministry. On the contrary, it was the duty of every Englishman, at such a moment, to strengthen the Government. On the next day the fatal intelligence was received, and Lord Rosebery was able to prove the sincerity of his declaration. It is easy to laugh at the airs of self-sacrifice assumed by certain politicians when they have at last obtained, by much solicitation, the summit of their hopes. But there can be no question that for Lord Rosebery to accept Cabinet office at this particular moment was a distinct proof of political courage and personal devotion to Mr. Gladstone. At the best he could hope for a few months of nominal power, in a Department that offers no scope for public talents, while for the sake of this doubtful advantage he saddled himself with responsibility for several years' mismanagement of foreign affairs, and became liable to a share of the odium incurred by every member of the Administration on account of the death of Gordon. The action or inaction of the Government was not merely blamed as a blunder: it was freely denounced as a crime, and persons who in a general way took no vivid interest in politics joined in the outcry against Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues. It may be said, perhaps, that by this evidence of staunchness he established an indefeasible claim on the Leader of the party, and made it certain that he would receive, at the next distribution of public offices, a fuller and more suitable recognition of his services. This, of course, is true in a sense, but it was by no means easy to say when the Liberals, after their impending defeat, would return to power, nor was it very likely that their leader in that event would be Mr. Gladstone.

It was hoped that, by recruiting a statesman distinguished for Imperial sympathies, the Government might partly rehabilitate itself in public opinion. With complete loyalty, Lord Rosebery, on public platforms, associated himself henceforth with the Soudan policy of his colleagues, but it is stated, though without any external evidence, that he set himself to stiffen the attitude of the Government in regard to foreign affairs. There was no visible indication of such a change having been effected. Certainly it was not provided by their handling of the Penjdeh crisis.

In pursuance of an agreement between Lord Granville and M. de Giers, a Joint Boundary Commission had been appointed, Sir Peter Lumsden acting for the British and General Zelenoi for the Russians. The late Ameer of Afghanistan had, however, announced that he would fight rather than give up 'a piece of a fragment from the ruins of his frontier.' He sent up a party of native levies to hold Penjdeh; the Russians advanced to Yalatan. Naturally, a collision took place, and the Afghans were mowed down by the Russian breech-loaders. The Ameer had been warned beforehand that we should not protect him from the consequences of his rash challenge, but it was humiliating that British officers should have to stand by with folded arms while our allies were being put to rout. The Ameer had successfully forced his partner's hand. Orders were given for the mobilisation of two army corps in India, offers of help were received from Scindiah, Holkah, and the Nizam. At home a message from the Queen was delivered to both Houses of Parliament, which were informed that a 'time of emergency had arrived.' The first-class Army Reserve and Militia Reserve were called out. The long-anticipated war between England and Russia seemed at

last to be imminent. On April 8th Mr. Gladstone spoke of the action of Russia as an 'unprovoked aggression,' and on the 21st he submitted a vote for eleven millions sterling. In asking for this sum of money he made no special reference to the Penjdeh affair, but spoke only of requirements for the Soudan, the general condition of public affairs, and the 'possible demands' on the military resources of the Empire. The reticence, however, was sufficiently well understood, and there seemed no way out of the difficulty except by resort to arms. At the last moment, however, Abdur Rahman discovered, after an interview with Lord Dufferin, the new Governor-General of India, that he was not prepared to insist that Penjdeh was within his boundary. He was quite content to accept any delimitation that might be arranged for him by the British, provided that it gave him certain points which he specified. In these circumstances it became feasible to negotiate with St. Petersburg, and the whole dispute was referred to a Commission, whose award, given two years later, was duly carried into effect. It cannot be said that the conduct of this dangerous business reflected credit on the sagacity of the Government. They had narrowly escaped being rushed into war over a dispute in which it was extremely doubtful whether we had a presentable case. Nevertheless, it was proved that a point might be reached at which Mr. Gladstone's Administration would prefer fighting to concession. Nothing, however, could now redeem their character, and on June 9th they were defeated by twelve votes on an amendment to the Finance Bill—dealing mainly with the proposal to increase the duty on beer and spirits. It is possible that Mr. Gladstone might have reversed what he chose to accept as a Vote of No Confidence, but this would only

have been to prolong a futile agony. He resigned next day, and Lord Salisbury agreed to form a stop-gap Government for winding up the business of the Session.

Mr. Gladstone's Administration was destroyed not so much by the House of Commons' vote as by internal feuds, and the four months' experience of Cabinet life which had been enjoyed by Lord Rosebery were, perhaps, chiefly useful as a preparation in the art of maintaining outward harmony amongst dissentient colleagues. The Radical members, elated by their triumph in having ejected Mr. Forster, but smarting under the subsequent necessity of accepting and defending the Coercion in Ireland which they had made the ground of their latest attack upon him, showed their independence by advocating a programme of domestic legislation which their Whig colleagues repudiated with open disgust. It would be going too far to say that Mr. Chamberlain paid no regard to the remonstrances of his Chief, but they did not prevent him from repeating his indiscretions. We can read in Mr. Morley's pages the alarm inspired in Mr. Gladstone's mind in July, 1883, by the 'unlimited liberty of speech' claimed by the President of the Board of Trade and exercised at the recent dinner of the Cobden Club. It was in the autumn of 1884 that the 'Doctrine of Ransom' was expounded, and in January, 1885, in the course of his agitation against the Peers, Mr. Chamberlain advocated certain reforms which, in the excited controversy of the time, were considered to portend an attack on private property in land. In consequence of these and similar utterances we are told that Mr. Gladstone 'made a lenient communication to the orator,' and suggested that explanations should be given at the next meeting of the Cabinet. It must not be supposed, however,



that the Prime Minister was specially irritated by the left wing. Writing to Lord Granville, he declares, just after this incident, that, 'on the whole, weak-kneed Liberals had given more trouble than the Radicals.' But in Mr. Chamberlain's conduct he found a 'method and system' which indicated a 'far sighted purpose' that was 'ominous enough.' Moreover, it provided the Opposition with an opportunity for attack.

On the Soudan question, of course, the feuds in the Cabinet were even more hotly contested than on domestic policy, and after one meeting Mr. Gladstone remarked to a colleague, 'A very fair Cabinet to-day—only three resignations.' It was his one object to avert a public rupture, and to attain that object he balanced carefully between the Whigs and Radicals, between the advocates of a stronger foreign policy and the supporters of peace at almost any price. As Prime Minister he represented the central group within his own Cabinet, and it was, no doubt, with a view of strengthening his personal influence, that he invited and pressed Lord Rosebery to become a member, as being a Radical who would yet stand well with the Moderate Liberals. This, no doubt, was the chief reason why Mr. Gladstone urged him, and why he consented, to throw in his lot with the destinies of a falling Administration.

It was a generous act done without any ostentation or pretence of self-immolation on the altar of friendship or public duty. Nor was it without reward. After every allowance had been made for the national, and occasionally clannish, spirit, in which Scotchmen back their own countrymen, the demonstration held in the November of this year was a signal proof of public esteem. A banquet in Lord Rosebery's honour was given by the Scottish Liberal Club

at Edinburgh in special recognition of the 'very remarkable services' which he had rendered to the party 'both in Scotland and England.' What, in fact, had he done? He had brought about Mr. Gladstone's victory in Midlothian; he had made a certain number of speeches in Parliament and on public platforms; he had held a minor office in the Government for a brief period; he had been a member of the Cabinet about four months; he had been vigilant in looking after distinctively Scottish interests at Westminster; and he had spent a certain amount of money in giving political parties. This is a fair summary of Lord Rosebery's achievements during the last five years. It would scarcely account for the 'admiration and gratitude' to which Scottish Liberals had assembled to give formal expression.

The explanation is, in the first place, that Scottish Liberals were absolutely devoted to Mr. Gladstone, and looked upon Lord Rosebery as the most faithful and efficient supporter of their hero's authority. In the second place, he had always shown himself a good Scotchman, and maintained the credit of his country by his success in every sort of undertaking. Finally, he combined a sincere, though not extreme, Liberalism with high birth and a great fortune. He was not merely a capable politician; he was also a social ornament of the party. It seemed eminently fit and proper that the Liberal leadership should be kept amongst Scotchmen, and that when it passed from the hands of their adopted countryman, Mr. Gladstone, it should be transmitted to the Lord of Dalmeny. This was the object of the ceremony which was graced by the presence of Mr. Gladstone. The allusions made by various speakers to the distinguished position that the guest of the evening was destined to occupy were cheered with an enthusiasm which

was significant of something more than the geniality appropriate to a complimentary gathering.

In reply Lord Rosebery spoke of his efforts towards reforming the House of Lords and of his hope for a closer union with the Colonies. In alluding to his work on behalf of Scottish administration (which had resulted, under Lord Salisbury's Government, in the establishment of a distinct Department) he made use of language which at the time attracted no special attention.

When, as Mr. Parnell would say, I took off my coat in that cause, I did it not merely on behalf of Scottish administration, but because I believe that there is one principle with which the Liberal party will have much to do—the principle that, when there is a vigorous and a real and a loyal nationality, it is not wise to suppress or to ignore that nationality, and that the better policy is to satisfy its just aspirations, for by doing so you will be promoting, in the highest and the best sense, the efficiency and the unity of the Empire at large.

I have left the greatest question to the last. As it seems to me, far from there being no questions of the future, these great subjects come rolling towards us like the waves of the Atlantic, that come straight from the shores of America to break themselves on the shores of Europe ; but high above them all there comes the supreme billow of all, with appalling volume and with curling crest—the wave of Irish demand and of Irish discontent. I do not pretend to be any judge of the procedure of the House of Commons, but I do venture to say this, that if things turn out as we are told they will, that question will elbow and shoulder away all others, and will absorb the mind and the time and the energies of Parliament to the exclusion of every other question we may have to deal with. I do not pretend to say how that question is to be settled, but I believe it can be settled only in one direction. If you can obtain from the representatives of Ireland a clear and constitutional demand which will represent the wishes of the people of Ireland, and which will

not conflict with the unity or supremacy of this country, I believe that by satisfying that demand in such a way as not to need further readjustment, but to meet the just requirements of the Irish people, you will have cut off for ever the poisonous spring of discontent, and that Ireland in the future may see in this country not her hereditary foe and her hereditary oppressor, but her best ally and her best friend.

In order to explain the significance of these words, coupled though they were with general declarations as to maintaining the strength and the authority and the stability of the Empire, it is necessary to give a brief résumé of the relations of the two English parties towards the Nationalists since Lord Salisbury had taken office in June. One of the last decisions of the Gladstone Administration had been, at the urgent instance of Lord Spencer, to bring in a Coercion Bill in place of the expiring Act. The Conservative Government (which included Lord Carnarvon as Lord Lieutenant and Lord Randolph Churchill as Indian Secretary) at once announced that they would try the experiment of dispensing with exceptional legislation. The Viceroy quoted official statistics to show that crime had diminished in Ireland, and there was the practical objection to proposing a measure of Coercion that Lord Salisbury had no majority in the House of Commons and was, therefore, afraid of doing anything that might prolong a Session in which he might easily be defeated. Finally—and this, perhaps, was the operative reason—the Nationalists were now at bitter feud with the Liberals, and it was considered good electioneering not to exasperate them against the Conservatives. On these grounds the new Government resolved to ‘trust the people of Ireland.’ But they went further. It was known that Lord Randolph

Churchill had entered into some sort of understanding with Mr. Parnell, while Lord Carnarvon and at least one other member of the Cabinet were considered 'unsound' on the Home Rule question.

The Lord Lieutenant had not been many days in office when he held his 'secret interview' with Mr. Parnell, in an empty house in Dublin, and made certain overtures which he stipulated should not be taken as binding on the Government, but which induced the Nationalist Leader to believe, or at least gave him afterwards an excuse for stating, that the Conservatives, if returned after the next General Election, would propose a Statutory Parliament for Ireland with power to protect Irish industries and buy out the landlords. The details of the interview were not made public for nearly a year afterwards, but that some negotiations were in progress was understood by all politicians who were at all behind the scenes. It is also known that Lord Carnarvon hoped, and even attempted, to convert Lord Salisbury to a modified scheme of Home Rule. But even those who stood outside the confidence of Ministers had their public acts and words to show which way the wind was blowing. When Mr. Parnell moved in the House of Commons that an inquiry should be held into the conduct of the Irish Executive in regard to the Barbaville and Maamtrasna murders, the House of Commons, which still contained a nominal majority of Liberals, rejected what was in fact a Vote of Censure on Lord Spencer. The reply of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who was then Leader of the House of Commons, was, perhaps, sufficiently correct—Lord Carnarvon was willing to receive a memorial on the subject and inquire into all the circumstances, just as he would in any other case



that might be brought before him. But Lord Randolph seized the occasion to say that the new Administration divested itself of all responsibility for the acts of its predecessor. This demonstration was warmly resented by moderate men of both the English parties—it seemed like sanctioning an attack on Lord Spencer for his unflinching vindication of the law against persons convicted of grave crime on absolutely unquestionable evidence. The blunder was partly rectified by Lord Salisbury, who took the first occasion of paying a public compliment to Lord Spencer on the high and manly courage he had shown in enforcing justice in Ireland. But, though Lord Salisbury and his Administration were thus exonerated from complicity, the suspicion aroused by the ‘Maamtrasna intrigue’ clung to Lord Randolph, who was at this time regarded as the dominant force, and possibly the future Leader, of the Conservative party. The Liberals, therefore, had already been given some excuse for accusing the Government of trafficking with the Nationalist party.

On 24 August Mr. Parnell at Dublin formulated the Home Rule demand. The Irish Parliament was to be given practically absolute power in the island, nor was there then any suggestion of control from Westminster. Mr. Chamberlain, who, as we have seen, had already identified himself in Mr. Gladstone’s Cabinet with a scheme for a National Council, and was not opposed to the principle of Home Rule, retorted that Mr. Parnell’s latest proposals were quite unacceptable, and marked a great advance on anything previously known as Home Rule. This would be establishing a new foreign country, and not a friendly one, within a few miles of our shores. Even Mr. John Morley declared (16 September) that Separation would be

a disaster to Ireland and a disgrace to England. Mr. Gladstone's election address, issued two days later, contained a fairly explicit passage. 'In my opinion, not now for the first time delivered, the limit is clear within which any desires of Ireland, constitutionally ascertained, may, and beyond which they cannot, receive the assent of Parliament. To maintain the supremacy of the Crown, the unity of the Empire, and all the authority of Parliament necessary for the conservation of that unity, is the first duty of every representative of the people. Subject to this governing principle, every grant to portions of the country of enlarged powers for the management of their own affairs is, in my view, not a source of danger, but a means of averting it, and is in the nature of a new guarantee for increased cohesion, happiness, and strength.' The natural interpretation to place in Mr. Gladstone's words was that he would give Ireland a very extended form of local government, but would not sanction a separate Legislature independent of the Imperial Parliament.

Lord Salisbury's well-known speech at Newport, three weeks later, was less easy to construe than most of his utterances. Certainly it could not fairly be made to bear the interpretation placed upon it by some Liberal commentators. It was not a promise of Home Rule or even a suggestion that he would favourably consider such a scheme, yet it did not absolutely close the door against the principle. Having pointed out the dangers and drawbacks of local government in a country like Ireland, where majorities might make an oppressive use of their power, he declared that, with respect to 'larger organic questions,' the Conservative party looked upon the integrity of the Empire as more important than any other political consideration.

Mr. Parnell had recently made a marked reference to the position of Austria and Hungary, and seemed to suggest a similar arrangement between Great Britain and Ireland, as though 'some notion of Imperial Federation was floating in his mind.' Lord Salisbury regarded Imperial Federation, though the idea was still shapeless and unformed, as one of the questions of the future. He would not say anything to discourage a closer union between the mother country and the 'marvellous cluster of dependencies' that distinguished the British from any other Empire, ancient or modern. 'But, with respect to Ireland,' Lord Salisbury went on, 'I am bound to say that I have never seen any plan or any suggestion that will give me at present the slightest ground for anticipating that it is in that direction that we shall find any satisfactory solution of the Irish problem. I wish that it may be so, but I think we shall be holding out false expectations if we avow a belief which 'as yet, at all events, we cannot entertain. To maintain the integrity of the Empire must, undoubtedly, be our first policy with regard to Ireland.'

This somewhat abstract argument was, of course, a refusal to contemplate Home Rule as part of any immediate party programme, but it did not altogether ban the idea. It was suspected, quite unfairly, that Lord Salisbury was but temporising, and might be found amenable to pressure. Also it was believed, not without grounds, that his counsel might not be followed by his party. He had not yet given proof of the skill and determination that he afterwards displayed in leadership, and the movement had already been planned for pushing him on one side in favour of Lord Randolph Churchill. What he said, therefore, might, it was argued, be taken rather as expressing what he believed

to be the right policy than as pledging the party against a course that he considered inexpedient.

On the very day of Lord Salisbury's speech at Newport Mr. Chamberlain arrived at Hawarden, and had a long talk with Mr. Gladstone on various questions of the day. As to Irish policy Mr. Gladstone wrote to Lord Granville that they were 'pretty well agreed'—though Mr. Chamberlain still thought, while Mr. Gladstone doubted, that Mr. Parnell would acquiesce in a County Government Bill, 'good as far as it went, maintaining on other matters his general attitude.' What they were agreed upon was that 'it would be a disgrace to the political genius of the two nations if they could not continue so far to understand one another as to bring their differences to an accommodation.'

Thinking, not without reason, that some of the most influential Conservatives had been coquetting with Home Rule, Mr. Gladstone, who had supported in his Cabinet the scheme for an Irish National Elective Council, proposed by Mr. Chamberlain, had already begun to think about taking the plunge. A few days before this interview with Mr. Chamberlain he had written privately to Mr. Childers expressing 'decided sympathy' with what Mr. Morley calls 'a tolerably full-fledged scheme of Home Rule.' But he pointed out the untrustworthy character of the Nationalist leaders and their disposition to 'raise their terms on any favourable indication.' His intention, already formed, was, therefore, not to refuse their demand, but to reduce it to the lowest possible dimensions. A letter, dated November 10th, shows a sensible advance. It is addressed to Lord Hartington, and speaks of 'a possible concession to Ireland of full power to manage her own local affairs.' This, however, was the ultimate point to which Mr.

Gladstone assumed that Lord Hartington could be induced to proceed. He himself thought that, if 'that consummation' were to be contemplated at all, action at a stroke would be 'more honourable, less unsafe, less uneasy, than the jolting process of a series of partial measures.'

This letter was written from Dalmeny, and it was in this spirit, we may fairly assume, that the conversations were conducted between guest and host. Lord Rosebery, in fact, had called Mr. Gladstone's attention to Mr. Parnell's suggestion that the Liberal Leader should frame a plan for giving Ireland the management of her own affairs without prejudice to Imperial unity and interests. Thereupon, though Mr. Gladstone was staying in Lord Rosebery's house, and was to appear that evening on the same platform, he put down his views in writing. He set forth five reasons why he should not accept Mr. Parnell's challenge: (1) It was not the duty of the Leader of an Opposition to produce a detailed scheme; (2) It would be better that the Conservatives, if they had a majority after the election, should bring forward the proposal; (3) The feud between the late Liberal Government and the Nationalists had left Mr. Gladstone in great ignorance of their 'interior mind'; (4) The principle and basis of 'an admirable measure' had already been laid by himself and others before the country; (5) The final and paramount reason was that the production of a plan by the Liberal Leader would ensure 'the opposition of the Tories *en bloc*.' Mr. Parnell, we are told, was afraid of the opposition of the House of Lords. That idea weighed little with Mr. Gladstone. The idea of constituting a Legislature for Ireland, whenever seriously and responsibly proposed, would, he said, cause a mighty heave in the body politic. 'It will be as difficult to carry the Liberal party and the two British



nations in favour of a Legislature for Ireland as it was easy to carry them in the case of Irish Disestablishment. I think it may possibly be done, but only by the full use of a great leverage.' His greatest endeavours were therefore confined to 'laying the ground' by insisting on 'the possibility, the gravity, even the solemnity,' of the Nationalist demand.

Such were the circumstances in which on 13 November Lord Rosebery made the reference which has been quoted to the Irish Question. It did not commit the speaker to any known scheme of Home Rule, or even pledge him to consider any such plan as would be acceptable to the Nationalists. But it showed that his mind was open on the Imperial side to any proposal for extended devolution that would not conflict with certain essential conditions. It was as an Imperialist—though, perhaps, for other reasons as well—that Mr. Rhodes contributed £10,000 as a free gift to the Nationalist Exchequer, and among the supporters of Imperial Federation there were not a few who believed that the movement might well be inaugurated by a considerable measure of devolution in regard to the special affairs of England, Wales, and Scotland, as well as Ireland.

Nothing, however, that Mr. Gladstone or any of his late colleagues could say, whether in public or private, availed to modify the attitude of Mr. Parnell. A past master in craft and intrigue, he penetrated at a glance the ingenuous dissemblings of the Liberal statesman. Mr. Gladstone declined to be drawn! Very well, he should be driven! On 21 November Mr. Parnell issued the manifesto in which he exhorted all Irishmen in Great Britain to vote against the Liberal Party—against the men who had covered Ireland and deluged Egypt with blood, who were menacing religious liberty in the schools and freedom of speech

in Parliament, and who promised in the country generally a repetition of the crimes and blunders of the last Liberal Administration. Mr. Gladstone from Midlothian had asked for such a majority as would maintain the independence of the House of Commons, as a whole, in dealing with the Irish Question, and hoped that, from one end of Great Britain to the other, not a single representative would be returned who, for one moment, would listen to any proposal tending to impair the visible and sensible Empire.

The result of the appeal to the country was precisely the one Mr. Gladstone had deprecated. So far from the new House of Commons being in an independent position for dealing with the Irish Question, the Nationalist members were masters of the Parliamentary situation. The Conservatives (249) and the Home Rulers (86) were exactly equal to the Liberals (335).

Up to this point, or till about this point, it seems pretty clear that, though Lord Rosebery was generally in favour of an approximation to the Nationalist views, he had not given his adhesion to any definite plan of Home Rule. Early in December Lord Spencer, who was staying at Hawarden with Mr. Gladstone, was joined by Lord Rosebery; and Lord Granville, who had recently gone away, was informed on the 9th by Mr. Gladstone that he 'thought his conversations with Lord Spencer and Lord Rosebery had been satisfactory.' What he looked forward to was 'a healthful, slow fermentation in many minds.' Three days later a feeler was thrown out in the 'Daily News,' suggesting that a small committee should be formed of the leaders of both parties—with Mr. Parnell and some of his friends—to consider what sort of a legislature it would be safe and wise to

establish in Dublin. But by this time the hesitating Conservatives had made up their minds. Lord Salisbury and his immediate followers had never wavered, and the others found themselves compelled to accept the official policy. They realised also that Mr. Gladstone was walking into an open trap.

On 17 December, in reply to a definite inquiry from Lord Hartington, Mr. Gladstone had explained what in his mind were the conditions of an 'admissible plan.' They were, briefly (1) Union of the Empire and the due supremacy of Parliament; (2) Protection for Minorities; (3) Fair allocation of Imperial charges; (4) A statutory basis as being preferable to a revival of Grattan's Parliament. Mr. Gladstone added that 'neither as opinions nor instructions have I to any one alive promulgated these ideas as decided upon by me.'

Nevertheless, on that morning the 'Standard' and the 'Leeds Mercury' announced that Mr. Gladstone was prepared to deal with Home Rule on the following lines:—

The unity of the Empire, the authority of the Crown, and the supremacy of Parliament were to be maintained.

An Irish Parliament was to be established and entrusted with administrative and legislative powers.

There was to be security for the representation of minorities and the partition of Imperial charges.

A certain number of Irish members were to be nominated by the Crown.

The parallelism was very remarkable. Yet in the letter to Lord Hartington it had been plainly intimated that in Mr. Gladstone's judgment the time had not arrived for any sort of disclosure. In the evening papers of that day, accord-

ingly, a disclaimer was published. The statement, Mr. Gladstone asserted, was not an accurate representation of his views, but was, he presumed, a speculation upon them. It had not been published with his knowledge or authority; nor was any other, beyond his own public declarations.

The denial was tantamount to admitting that the statement was substantially correct. This interpretation was borne out by a speech made that evening by Mr. Chamberlain, who boldly declared that Mr. Gladstone was prepared, subject to maintaining the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of the Crown, to give 'the largest possible measure of local government that could be conceived or desired.' Mr. Chamberlain also stated, with reference to the stories about negotiations between Mr. Parnell and the leaders of the Liberal party, that he had had no part in such negotiations. In this connexion it should be added that in the letter to Lord Hartington Mr. Gladstone had said that amongst his late colleagues he had had most communication with Lord Granville, Lord Spencer, and Lord Rosebery. Writing next day to Lord Granville, he again referred to Lord Spencer and Lord Rosebery as the only other colleagues whom he had seen.

So far is it from being true that Lord Rosebery was from the first a lukewarm adherent of Home Rule, that he is seen to be one of the first who supported Mr. Gladstone's general idea. As it gradually assumed more definite shape, Lord Rosebery was constantly with his Chief, and was, no doubt, taken into frequent and intimate consultation. At the fateful Christmastide, which was to determine the course of party politics for the next twenty years, he was at Mr. Gladstone's side at Hawarden.

A little time before Mr. Gladstone had met Mr. Arthur Balfour at the Duke of Westminster's, and, after leaving Eaton, took advantage of an informal conversation which they had held on Irish affairs to suggest that the Conservative Government should take up Home Rule. He was still anxious before all things not to identify the fortunes of the Liberal party with the Nationalist cause. His communication was, of course, forwarded by Mr. Balfour to Lord Salisbury, and politely declined. He was, therefore, compelled either to give up Home Rule or to rely on the Liberal party carrying it through. Mr. Parnell also had arrived at a corresponding conclusion. Though he made no attempt to conceal his dislike of the Liberals—especially of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain, with a new Coercion Bill in their pockets—he had made up his mind that the Conservatives would not touch Home Rule after the publication of the 'seemingly authoritative statements of Mr. Gladstone's intention to deal with the question.' Moreover, the friendly Viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, had resigned, and with him the Chief Secretary (Sir William Hart-Dyke), whose successor, Mr. W. H. Smith, was known to have prepared a Coercion Bill. This, of course, meant what Lord Salisbury expected and intended—that the eighty-six Nationalist votes on the first opportunity after the meeting of the new Parliament would be cast against his Government.

The chance was provided on the Address, when Mr. Jesse Collings moved and carried an amendment, expressing regret that Ministers had made no proposal to provide agricultural labourers with 'allotments and small holdings on equitable terms as to rent and security of tenure.' This embodied what was known as the policy



of 'Three Acres and a Cow,' and was thought a good enough stick to beat a Government which neither desired nor would have been able to carry on public business. The motion was carried by seventy-nine votes, and Lord Salisbury's first Administration was brought to an end.

Mr. Gladstone was entrusted with the duty of forming a new Government. Of his old colleagues, those who would not even consider the principle of Home Rule at once stood aside—Lord Hartington, Lord Selborne, Lord Derby, Lord Northbrook, Sir Henry James, and others. The Cabinet was constituted as follows: Mr. Gladstone (First Lord of the Treasury and Lord Privy Seal); Lord Herschell (Lord Chancellor); Lord Spencer (Lord President); Sir William Harcourt (Chancellor of the Exchequer); Mr. Childers (Home Secretary); Lord Rosebery (Foreign Secretary); Lord Granville (Colonial Secretary); Mr. Campbell-Bannerman (War Office); Lord Kimberley (India); Mr. George Trevelyan (Scotland); Lord Ripon (Admiralty); Mr. John Morley (Chief Secretary); Mr. Mundella (Board of Trade); Mr. Chamberlain (Local Government Board).

We may pass over the negotiations which resulted, shortly afterwards, in the retirement of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. George Trevelyan from their posts within the Cabinet, with those of Mr. Jesse Collings and Mr. Heneage from minor posts in the Government. So far as public attention could be turned to any other subject than Home Rule, it was attracted by the appointment of Lord Rosebery to the Foreign Office. Fairly or unfairly, Lord Granville was so closely associated with the mismanagement of our external affairs during Mr. Gladstone's previous Administration that it would have been highly injudicious to restore him to his old position. Lord Rosebery, on the

other hand, had already been given, and had proudly acknowledged, the name of Liberal Imperialist. During the Election Campaign of the autumn of 1885 he had by no means confined himself to the stock subjects of party controversy. More than once he had spoken in favour of strengthening the tie between the Mother Country and the Colonies. At Paisley, in October, he declared that to Liberals the Empire was 'most dear.' It was the Liberal party that had struck the chains off the slaves, and put an end to the system by which our fairest Colonies were flooded with the refuse of our civilisation—the convicts. The Liberals had given them Home Rule, had favoured and fostered that commerce which was at present their most practical link with the Mother Country. And the Liberals hoped to broaden and strengthen the foundations of a noble structure by basing them on the affection, sympathy, and intelligence of the scattered but united races of the Empire.

At Kilmarnock, again, two or three days later, Lord Rosebery remarked that he had recently been described as a Liberal Imperialist. 'If a Liberal Imperialist means that I am a Liberal who is passionately attached to the Empire, and interested intensely in the best means of sustaining and promoting the interest of the Empire; if it means—as I believe it does—that I am a Liberal who believes that the Empire is best maintained upon the basis of the fullest democracy, and that the basis is most powerful when it represents the greatest number of persons and subjects—if these be accurate descriptions of what a Liberal Imperialist is, then I am a Liberal Imperialist, and I believe that you are Liberal Imperialists, too.'

There was, perhaps, nothing very definite or enlightening in these declarations, but the general sentiment had been

sufficiently clear. The fact that it had been thus emphatically asserted by the statesman who had been chosen to replace Lord Granville was generally taken to indicate that the Liberal party did not intend to have their prospects blighted by repeating the worst and most serious errors committed in their previous term of power.

We have seen that the defeat of the Liberal Government had spurred on Lord Rosebery to take a more active part than recently in the platform work of the party, and his services were amply recognised by his Chief. At a meeting in Midlothian, over which he was presiding, a letter was received in which Lord Rosebery was mentioned as one 'who has to play, if his life is spared, an important part in the future politics of the United Kingdom.' It was at Edinburgh that he asked and answered the question, 'What is a Liberal?' 'I remember,' he said, 'that the name "Liberal" is good enough for Mr. Gladstone and good enough for Mr. Bright. I am quite content to walk under an umbrella with those gentlemen.' He was vigorous in protesting against a split in the party. 'He sympathised,' he said on another occasion, 'with the Radicals, but let us take care,' he added, 'that in straining after what is desirable we do not lose what is vital and essential, that in grasping what we should like to have—aye, and what we mean to have—we do not slip down and plunge—leaders and party, Parliament and Government—into the Serbonian bog.'

## CHAPTER VI

Greek claims—Lord Rosebery's note—Batoum a free port—Russian defiance of the Berlin Treaty—Lord Rosebery's protest—France and the New Hebrides—Spanish Treaty—Convention with China—Duties of a Foreign Minister.

THE few months in 1886 during which Lord Rosebery held the office of Foreign Secretary gave him ample opportunity of justifying the expectations of his friends. Fortunately he went to his work unfettered by compromising declarations, while his Chief was far too deeply immersed in the Irish problem to exercise any active supervision over our external affairs. Lord Rosebery had, indeed, taken a prominent part in Mr. Gladstone's crusade against Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern policy, but even with regard to Turkish misgovernment he had observed a certain moderation of language. Of his criticism upon the Berlin Treaty—an instrument which has been somewhat hastily condemned, since no attempt has ever been made to enforce it as a whole—the most distinctive feature was, perhaps, his complaint that the claims of Greece had been unfairly overlooked or set aside. He had been chairman of the Greek Committee, and was therefore known as a friend and supporter of the Hellenic race and aspirations. The reputation stood him in good stead, since one of his first duties was to control the indiscretions of Athenian statesmanship. The predisposing cause of trouble had arisen in the previous autumn, when the incorporation of Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria was effected by a sudden stroke of policy. It

was one of the charges against Lord Beaconsfield that he had flouted Russia and helped Turkey by resisting the natural union of the two Provinces. But with the ingratitude which has distinguished most of the nationalities that Russia has befriended, the policy of Bulgaria had become, if not amicable towards the Porte, at least hostile to her northern benefactor. Servia, more amenable to St. Petersburg influence, and having ambitions of her own to gratify, was foolish enough to make war on Bulgaria, and experienced an exemplary defeat. But the seeds of trouble had been sown in the Balkans. The Greeks had armed themselves for a campaign against Turkey, and, if they had been allowed to carry out their purpose, might have raised a worse disturbance than the one which the Berlin Treaty had been meant to appease.

There was never any question of Great Britain going to war in support of Greek aggression, nor were the most ardent Radicals disposed to aid and abet the aims of Russia. The Penjdeh affair had frightened some, and disgusted others, and all that Englishmen just at present cared about was that nothing should be done which might land us in a fruitless struggle. Relying, perhaps, on their usefulness as constituent parts in a crazy fabric, and hoping that the Great Powers would see them safely through their adventure, Greece and Servia defied the Identical Note issued by Europe, and refused to disarm. The absurdity of the situation did not prevent it from being dangerous. It was necessary that prompt and efficient pressure should be applied to M. Delyannis. Another Note was addressed to the Athens Government, which was bluntly informed that it had no legitimate grievance against Turkey, and would not be permitted to make any naval attack. The



Greek Premier, who always played his audacious game with spirit, replied that for his country to submit to the menaces of Europe would be to compromise its liberty. The Greeks, therefore, would not yield. It was at this critical period that Lord Rosebery went to Downing Street. He decided to make no departure from the policy of his predecessor. In a Note despatched to the Powers on May 6th he reviewed the conditions with which they had to deal. It had been hoped that Greece would display in the East 'the spectacle of a well-ordered State pursuing the path of material and constitutional progress.' Her recent conduct, however, had 'encouraged her enemies and disheartened her friends.' In a paroxysm of irritation against the possible enlargement of a neighbouring and friendly Christian State she had rushed to arms, and made herself not the calming and exemplary, but the menacing, element in the East. 'At a ruinous sacrifice she has raised an army wholly disproportionate to her population, on the one hand, and, on the other, wholly inadequate to cope with the largely superior forces of an Empire whose soldiers have a traditional reputation, an Empire with which she is at peace and which has offered her no imaginable cause of offence.' Her conduct had imposed immense sacrifices on the part of Turkey, where agriculture had at many places been brought to a standstill.

Turkey had addressed a series of representations to the Great Powers, and finally had presented a demand for the disarmament of Greece. Having referred to events which have already been described, Lord Rosebery stated that on 13 April the Powers had intimated their hope that Greece should comply with the unanimous wish of Europe for the maintenance of peace. M. Delyannis replied that Greece

had done nothing to disturb peace, but could not give up her claim to the frontier indicated at the Berlin Conference.

As the warlike preparations at Athens were still persisted in, a peremptory Note was issued by Great Britain, Germany, Austria, and Russia, fixing a date at which the disarmament should be commenced. France, it will be seen, was not in this instance acting with the other Powers. Taking advantage of this fact, M. Delyannis announced that he had been advised, by a telegram from M. de Freycinet, to comply with the wishes of the Powers. This counsel the Greek Premier intimated that he intended to adopt, but the undertaking was too vague to satisfy the Powers. When further evasion was attempted, it was decided to insist on a satisfactory explanation from Athens. By joining in the application of pressure, Lord Rosebery believed that the British Government were acting in a more friendly way to Greece than by allowing her to face a conflict with the power of Turkey. 'The welfare of Greece and of the Hellenic races outside her frontier has not ceased to be the object of that friendly solicitude of which this country has already given so many proofs, but they feel bound, for that very reason, to oppose a policy of unjust aggression, not less unjustifiable because pursued by a small State, which threatens disaster to Greece and a wanton disturbance to European peace.'

In accordance with these principles, the representatives of Great Britain, Germany, Austria, and Italy (the Russian Minister was at the time absent) withdrew from Athens, and a notice of blockade was presented against all Greek ships. Presently it became apparent that public opinion was no longer behind M. Delyannis, and he had to make way for M. Tricoupis. Within a few days the order was given for

disarmament, and for the time the fear of an outbreak in the East passed away. It should be explained that the coercion of Greece by the Concert of Europe would not have been quite so simple a matter as it seemed to superficial observers. France stood aside, through the national sympathy of a Liberal Republic with the Greek cause, and Russia all along showed that she could not be depended upon. At one point, indeed, she seceded from the Concert and almost broke it up. The audacity of M. Delyannis, therefore, was not absolutely irrational, but he carried it to such lengths that Mr. Gladstone himself expressly gave his personal sanction to the coercive action instituted by his Foreign Secretary.

A more severe test of Lord Rosebery's capacity was provided by the action of Russia in regard to Batoum. By the Treaty of Berlin this was declared to be a 'free port,' but in July, M. de Giers announced on behalf of the Czar that this covenant would no longer be held binding on Russia. There was no kind of excuse for this breach of faith, though many precedents might have been quoted. The Article was infringed, like several other Articles of the same instrument, because it was evident that the signatory Powers had no inclination to enforce it. France would not act against Russia, while Germany, seeing no interest of her own imperilled, would not move, and Austria was unwilling, even with Great Britain, to risk a quarrel with a Power whose military strength in Europe had been proved by her victory over Turkey. In these circumstances what could Lord Rosebery do but acquiesce—with or without recording a formal protest? He sent off a couple of 'strong' despatches, and in an interview with the Russian Ambassador spoke his mind about the action of the Czar.

Lord Rosebery pointed out that the matter did not concern Great Britain alone, but all the other signatory Powers as well. Its gravity consisted in the fact that Russia, without consultation with the others, had cancelled one of the principal covenants in the Treaty—one that had been accepted as ‘a set-off against the relinquishment of claims which were considered essential by the British representatives at the Congress.’ Great Britain had no special interest in the freedom of a port with which her trade was very small, but ‘one direct, supreme, and perpetual interest’ was at stake—the binding force and sanctity of international engagements. Great Britain, said the Foreign Secretary, was ready at all times and in all seasons to uphold that principle, and ‘could not palter with it’ in that instance. It declined, therefore, to recognise in any way the action of the Russian Government, and was compelled to place on record the view that ‘it constitutes a violation of the Treaty of Berlin, unsanctioned by the signatory Powers, that it tends to make future conventions of the kind difficult, if not impossible, and to cast doubt on those already concluded.’

Perhaps it would have been more dignified to record the protest and withhold the consent without reading a moral lecture that would only be laughed at in St. Petersburg. As we were not prepared to make any practical sacrifice on behalf of this Article in the Treaty, the show of indignation which, from every point of view Lord Rosebery was justified in feeling, did but intensify the insult put on Great Britain. It is, however, permissible to argue that no harm was done by delivering this formal protest against an indefensible breach of treaty obligations.

A question that arose in regard to the New Hebrides

required delicate handling, since it involved us in one of our then frequent discussions with the French Government, while it touched the interests and aroused the sensibilities of Australians and New Zealanders. The Colonial party in Paris had long coveted these islands, and it was proposed, in deference to their views, that the Republic should take them over—promising in return not to export recidivists in future to the Pacific, offering to make a general agreement with reference to that region, and undertaking to protect all missions. The suggestion was not altogether unreasonable, and New Zealand would have been glad to be rid of the recidivist nuisance, but the Australians protested, with characteristic vigour, against the establishment of a European Power within striking distance of their shores. A keen agitation was worked up in Victoria, and Mr. Graham Berry was deputed by the Federal Council of Australia to ‘resist by every means in his power’ any attempt on the part of a foreign Power to annex any of the Pacific islands. The sensitiveness of the Colonial statesmen was quite natural. For one thing, they regarded these outlying places as natural appanages of their continent. Moreover, they were painfully conscious of their inability to protect their coasts against a hostile raid. It must be borne in mind that in 1886 the British Navy did not occupy the predominant position which it afterwards attained on the seas, and the Colonies, though unwilling to make any material sacrifice for the sake of strengthening it, were acutely conscious and distressingly candid about any shortcomings on the part of the Mother Country. It was, perhaps, fortunate that Lord Rosebery was at this time in charge of the Foreign Office, since the Australians knew and liked him, while he displayed tact and judgment in his dealings with them.



The proposal of the French Government had been accepted by Great Britain subject to various conditions, of which the most important was the previous consent of the Australian Colonies. This being withheld, he replied that he could not assent to any departure from the present understanding between Great Britain and France, by which both countries were bound to respect the independence of the New Hebrides.

Meantime, however, two French men-of-war had landed a small force of troops, and hoisted the national flag. This enterprise was explained by the Government as having no object beyond the protection of French subjects, but it was considered advisable by Lord Rosebery to keep a strict watch over the doings of the military expedition, which, it appeared, had provided itself with building materials and other apparatus that seemed to suggest a permanent occupation. A couple of British vessels were at once despatched to the scene of operations, and the fate of the islands was left to be determined by negotiations between the two Governments. The business, however, was not settled before Lord Rosebery had retired from his brief tenure of the Foreign Office. In this instance, though the impatient patriotism of Australia demanded more drastic action, he had been able to save the islands from being 'rushed' by the sort of unauthorised tactics which Governments are apt to endorse if they have been successfully carried out.

The most important of the other matters on which Lord Rosebery was engaged were of a less troublesome nature. He concluded a Commercial Treaty with Spain, and accomplished, perhaps, all that was possible in the direction of modifying the vigour of the Protectionist policy

pursued by the Madrid Government. By lowering the duty on the light wines of Spain he gained for us such advantages as result from the position of a most favoured nation.

Another matter of diplomatic routine was the Convention with China in regard to the recently annexed province of Burmah. The Court of Peking, rightly or wrongly, claimed certain immemorial rights over Burmah as a vassal State, and it was considered advisable to recognise them in return for a formal admission by China that we were at full liberty to regulate Burmese affairs according to our discretion. It was agreed that the alleged custom of sending a tribute every ten years, consisting of articles produced in Burmah by the hands of native persons, should not be discontinued. The prudence of giving the Peking Court an excuse for pretending that we paid tribute to the Emperor of China was questioned at the time, but it does not appear that any practical mischief has resulted. The opportunity had not come for reducing the claims of the Mandarins to their correct proportions, and, in return for the ceremonial concession, we obtained a formal delimitation of frontier and an agreement to promote trade between China and Burmah. It was not, perhaps, a very valuable consideration, especially as we also undertook to countermand a commercial mission which had been contemplated to Tibet.

It is, of course, misleading to credit the head of a Department with all the work achieved during his tenure of office, or to blame him exclusively for such mistakes or may have been committed. The praise or blame may really be due, partly to his predecessor, partly to his permanent staff. But the theory of a Minister's personal responsibility to Parliament is so far confirmed by administrative facts that the

general success or failure of his Department is a roughly correct test of his industry and capacity for affairs. The foreign interests of Great Britain had not suffered while Lord Rosebery was Secretary of State, and his first experience at the Foreign Office may, therefore, be said to have justified the hopes and expectations that induced Mr. Gladstone to appoint the youngest member of his Cabinet to the most intricate and anxious work that can be allotted to an English statesman.

The duties of Foreign Minister were humorously expounded by Lord Rosebery at a Royal Academy banquet, when he had returned to them in 1893. The passage is characteristic of his after-dinner oratory:—

I have only to open a red box to be possessed of that magic carpet which took its possessor wherever he would go. Perhaps sometimes it carries me a little farther than that. I open it, and find myself at once in those regions where a travelled monarch and an intellectual Minister are endeavouring to reconcile the realms of Xerxes and Darius with the needs of nineteenth-century civilisation—I smell the scent of the roses, and hear the song of the bulbul. I open another box, which enables me to share the sports of the fur-seal—his island loves, his boundless swims in the Pacific; I can even follow him to Paris and see him—the *corpus delicti*—laid on the table of the Court of Arbitration. I can go still further. I can transfer myself to the Southern Pacific, where three of the greatest States in the world are endeavouring, not always with apparent success, to administer one of the smallest of islands—the island of Samoa—in close conjunction and alliance with one of our most brilliant men of letters. I will say this in virtue of my office—I follow every Court. Not a monarch leaves his capital on a journey, but I am on the platform in the spirit, if not in the body. I am in spirit in the gallery of every Parliament. I am ready and anxious—but not always successfully—to be present at the signing of every treaty. I think I have laid

sufficient claim before you to insist that, in future, when you consider Her Majesty's Ministers, you may not consider them merely as political creatures, but as persons who have also their imaginative side, as official Ariels roaming through time and space, not on broomsticks, but on boxes.

## CHAPTER VII

General Election of 1886—Lord Salisbury's second Administration—Lord Rosebery and Gladstonian Liberalism—Overtures for Liberal Reunion—Lord Rosebery on Reform of the House of Lords—Speech at Leeds on Imperial Federation in 1888—Commercial and Fiscal aspect—Subsequent development of Lord Rosebery's views—Speech at Burnley—Economic orthodoxy suspected—Explanation at the Liberal League—Arguments against the Birmingham policy.

THE rejection of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons by a majority of thirty, more than ninety Liberals having voted with the Opposition, did not convince Mr. Gladstone that the country was against him. With the high courage that distinguished him in domestic politics, he refused to resign, and made an appeal to the constituencies. It is said that he was influenced in this decision by the advice of party managers, who knew more about electioneering than electors. There was no ambiguity in the answer he received from the people of Great Britain, who returned less than two hundred supporters of his policy. Before the last returns had been received, he called a meeting of the Cabinet, and announced his intention of offering his resignation to the Queen without waiting to meet Parliament. A strong Conservative Administration was formed by Lord Salisbury, for, though Lord Hartington and the other Liberal Unionists were unwilling to join the Government, they could be relied upon for outside co-operation, while the group of Radicals who had voted with Mr. Chamberlain against Mr. Gladstone's Bill were prepared to lend a general support.



In these circumstances there was no special work for Lord Rosebery to prosecute at home, and he resolved to make a journey to India with Lady Rosebery. But it should be mentioned that, in the tribute which was paid by the defeated Prime Minister at Manchester to the colleagues who had stood by him in the hour of trial, a significant compliment was reserved for the youngest member of the late Cabinet. 'Of him I will say to the Liberal party of this country—and I say it not without reflection, for if I said it lightly I should be doing injustice not less to him than to them—that in him they see the man of the future.' There could be no misunderstanding of these words. It was to Lord Rosebery that Mr. Gladstone intended, when the time should come, to transmit the leadership of the party. It contained, we know, a statesman who had still stronger claims on the reversion, but, so far as Mr. Gladstone had authority to designate his successor, he had made it plain in 1886 what would be his choice. It was a decision that was never accepted by the whole party, though at this time Lord Rosebery was quite as popular among Radicals as among Moderate Liberals.

After spending about six months in the East, he threw himself vigorously into partisan controversy. One of his first public appearances was made in April, 1887, when he delivered an address to a Liberal Association in Glasgow. There was no mistake about his loyalty to 'that effete prejudice which, it was said, would soon die out—Gladstonian Liberalism.' He had 'almost unlimited belief in Mr. Gladstone.' The Home Rule question could not be postponed. Indeed the Government and the Liberal Unionists, by their policy of Coercion, were pushing it forward. The defeat of the late Government had not altered

the principles of the party. 'Our policy is one of absolute determination to carry out the principle that Ireland shall be allowed to manage her own affairs in the way of domestic legislation.' Subject to that principle, Liberals were prepared to consider, in the most conciliatory spirit, 'any and whatever proposal which is a *bona fide* offer to construct a plan acceptable to the Liberal party and to the people of Ireland.' They had no rooted love of their own plan, no pride of authorship. 'We only desire that some plan may be found which shall enable us to carry out our object; and by whomsoever that plan is proposed, whether publicly or privately, whether from the Tory benches or from the Liberal benches, or from the Liberal Unionists benches, we, I venture to say, will always be glad to consider and, if possible, support it.'

These words were spoken with a purpose. Lord Rosebery was labouring for a Liberal reunion. He would not purchase it, as had already been proposed, by dropping Home Rule, but he was ready—and here, no doubt, he was speaking for Mr. Gladstone as well as for himself—to accept any compromise offered by Liberal Unionists to which the Nationalists would agree. He was not thinking of the Hartington group. They had irredeemably pledged themselves to Lord Salisbury's Government since, with their assent, Mr. Goschen had succeeded Lord Randolph Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The politicians whom Lord Rosebery had in view were the Radical Unionists acting with Mr. Chamberlain. Their position was still somewhat undefined.

Mr. Chamberlain had confessed at Birmingham that Lord Randolph's resignation had weakened his confidence in the Government—he feared a recourse to reactionary policy.

The Liberals, he said, were agreed on ninety-nine parts of their programme; they disagreed only on one. Even on the land question they were not far apart. Until that had been solved Home Rule was impossible: when it had been solved, Home Rule would be unnecessary. 'I am convinced,' he added, 'that sitting round a table, and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation, almost any three men—leaders of the Liberal party—although they may hold opposite views upon another branch of the question, would yet be able to arrange some scheme.'

It was on this hint that the Round Table Conference was organised. The collapse of that undertaking, though it led to acrimonious charges and recriminations, and though Mr. Chamberlain spoke and voted in favour of Coercion as the only means of dealing with the Plan of Campaign, had not definitely destroyed the hope of a Liberal reunion. It should be borne in mind, however, that not all the English Home Rulers were anxious to bring about an accommodation. The more zealous would accept from their late colleagues nothing short of absolute submission, especially after the publication of the 'Parnell Letters' by the 'Times' had exacerbated party passions. An extremist speech by Mr. John Morley was seized upon by Mr. Chamberlain as marking 'the turning-point.' He was driven, he said, to the conclusion that on the Gladstonian side there was no longer any desire for reunion. 'We shall be taunted, I suppose, with an alliance with the Tories. At least, our allies will be English gentlemen, not the subsidised agents of a foreign conspiracy.'

This was decisive. The Parnellites would no longer co-operate with a party of which Mr. Chamberlain was a member. But on 27 April, when Lord Rosebery flew

his kite at Glasgow, there was just a remote possibility of appeasement, and he did his best to realise it. Mr. Gladstone himself, for some reason, was not altogether without hope of winning back Lord Hartington, but there was no longer any common ground for the two statesmen. Although fitful attempts were made from time to time to re-establish an understanding, it presently came to be recognised that the breach was past mending, and the three parties stood firm in their respective positions, the followers of Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain eventually forming a regular coalition.

Although Lord Rosebery remained staunch on the Home Rule question and the various issues connected with it, he was glad enough to test opinion on other subjects. In March, 1888, he returned in the House of Lords to his favourite idea of modifying the hereditary principle in that Chamber. The opportunity seemed favourable for self-reform since, with a strong Conservative Government in office, the discussion would not be embittered by a prospect of collision between the two Houses. He again moved for the appointment of a Select Committee, and justified his proposal by the example recently set in Hungary. The House of Lords was already cumbrous in point of numbers, yet the only way in which it could be brought into harmony with the Lower House on a great constitutional question was the creation of more Peerages. The incompatibility between the two Houses was more likely, as time went on, to increase than diminish. It was therefore expedient, at a 'moment of comparative calmness,' to reckon up 'our strength and weakness.' The strength lay in illustrious members, in ancient tradition, in persons who represented some of the wealth, some of the ancient blood, and some

of the genius in the country. The weakness lay in the 'indiscriminate and intemperate application of the hereditary principle.' It was not even an ancient principle. Not until the Dissolution of the Monasteries had its representatives acquired a majority in the House. Nor was it justified by working well. It made legislators of men who did not wish to be legislators, and Peers of men who did not wish to be Peers. It also brought in persons unfit to be legislators. 'I think we may say generally that five or six hundred not unprolific families must always be accompanied by a proportion of black sheep.' It was true that black sheep were also found in the House of Commons. But the responsibility did not lie with the House. 'The wind of the electorate bloweth whither it will.' It was different with the House of Lords. If a Peer should happen to be a knave or a fool, people at once began to blame the constitution of the House.

After drawing such distinction as was possible between the applications of the hereditary principle to the Crown and the Peerage, Lord Rosebery declared that the authority of the House had been greatly weakened by its conversion to some extent into a party instrument. Up to 1832 it had hardly been a party assembly—it had usually supported the Government of the day. It was Whig with Walpole, Tory with Pitt, and Tory again with Lord Liverpool. Consequently it had exercised great power and influence, and the Peers formed the majority of each Cabinet. In those days an adverse vote in that House might throw out a strong Government. This had happened on 7 May, 1832.

Lord Rosebery, however, did not wish to appear to be arguing against the abstract principle of a Second Chamber. That principle he regarded as established by strong argu-



ments. As for practical reforms, it would not be enough to introduce, as had been proposed, the 114 chairmen of the contemplated 'County Boards.' Again, the creation of a great number of Life Peerages would increase rather than diminish the present evil—the House was already too large.

What, then, were the real principles on which reform should proceed? The Privy Council would be an ideal Second Chamber. Of its 211 members no less than 109 were Peers. There was 'something ominous' about these figures. The average attendance of Peers throughout a Session in a recent year (1885) was 110. Nevertheless, Lord Rosebery did not suggest the adoption of the Privy Council as the Second Chamber. In the first place, it might be flooded with new creations. In the second place, the House of Lords would have to be abolished. Now it was a cardinal principle in English politics to respect old names and traditions. The name of the House of Lords must be retained, and the reconstructed Chamber must contain, as before, Peers and Lords of Parliament.

The principles of delegation and election must be adopted. This would reduce the House to a manageable size; it would exclude unworthy persons; it would establish a popular basis; it would guard against stagnation by providing for a constant succession of new members. Next, there must be a representative element in the House—a large infusion of elected Peers, elected either by the County Boards, the Municipalities, or the House of Commons, or by all three. Further, Life Peerages would form a valuable element in the House. Lastly, the Agents General or other representatives of the self-governing colonies should be given seats. The proportions of these various elements would of course be fixed.

It had been said that no increase of the power of the House of Lords could be effected without diminishing the power of the House of Commons. In case of a disagreement it would, no doubt, be necessary to find some other means than the creation of Peerages for bringing about a balance. But the real Mother of Parliaments had been the Magnum Concilium, which, in the reigns of the Edwards, had divided itself into two (and nearly into three). Lord Rosebery thought that under certain guarantees it might be provided that in any scheme of reform the two Houses should meet together and form one body, and by certain fixed majorities carry or reject a measure which had been in dispute between them.

Another remedy had been propounded. It had been suggested that a measure which had been passed once or twice by the Commons, and rejected once or twice by the Peers, should be 'enabled, in the language of diplomacy, to *passer outre*.' This, however, would involve great waste of time, and would also reduce the House of Lords to a second-rate court of revision or a debating society. Finally, Lord Rosebery suggested that any Peer should be at liberty to accept or refuse a writ of summons to the House of Lords, and, having refused, should become eligible to the House of Commons.

The motion was rejected by 97 votes against 50, but when, in the following month, Lord Dunraven brought in a Bill embodying most of Lord Rosebery's proposals, Lord Salisbury, in opposing it, promised himself to introduce a measure for the creation of Life Peerages. He also favoured the idea of enabling the Sovereign, in an Address from the House of Lords, to deprive a Peer of his right to receive a writ of summons. On June 15th he

redeemed this promise, and the Bill obtained its Second Reading, but there the matter ended.

One of Lord Rosebery's most important speeches was delivered this year (1888) at Leeds, on 11 October. The declaration of his views on Imperial Federation, though accepted at the time without unfavourable comment, has since been made the basis of attacks on his orthodoxy as a Free Trader. Having discussed the question whether our Consuls in foreign towns should give active assistance to the commercial undertakings of British subjects, he pointed out that of recent years our foreign policy had become more of a Colonial policy. Formerly it had been mainly an Indian policy, and, although this had involved us in complications that we might otherwise have avoided, we felt that they had been rightly undertaken in defence of so splendid a possession.

Now, however, Colonial influence overshadowed our foreign policy. In the first place, the Colonies were rising in importance and making constant representations on their own behalf. Secondly, other Great Powers had started on a career of Colonial aggrandisement. Here Lord Rosebery adverted to several questions of the day which were occupying the attention of the Foreign Office. There was the fisheries dispute between Canada and the United States, the French rights in Newfoundland, the settlement of boundaries in Africa, trade with Tibet, the competition in the Pacific—all of them questions relating to one or another of our Colonies. Then there was the question of trade between the Mother Country and the Colonies. Here it will be best to quote Lord Rosebery's words in full:—

There was at one time in this country a very great demand, founded on the belief that our Colonies were not trading with us as well as they do now, to be free from the responsibility of a

Colonial Empire. I think that demand has to a great extent ceased; but the people of this country will, in a not too distant time, have to make up their minds what footing they wish the Colonies to occupy with respect to them, or whether they desire their Colonies to leave them altogether. It is, I believe, absolutely impossible for you to maintain in the long run your present loose and indefinite relations to your Colonies, and retain those Colonies as parts of the Empire. That is a question as to which Chambers of Commerce ought to be able to make up their minds very definitely, because, in the first place, it is a commercial question. I do not believe, if our Colonies left us in that amicable spirit in which they tell us they might leave us—I do not believe that if they left us in however amicable a spirit—you would find them as good customers as they are now.

We have an opportunity of comparing our relations between a Colony that has left us and the Colonies that remain with us. When I speak of a Colony that has left us, I mean, of course, the United States. The United States have taken from us during the last ten years an average of £24,350,000 of home produce. Their population is nearly 60,000,000, and therefore they have taken of our home produce at the rate of about eight shillings a head. Now Canada, which, as you know, is coterminous with the United States, and which remains to us, has taken on an average £7,300,000 during the last ten years. Take the population at 5,000,000, and that gives nearly thirty shillings a head, or nearly three and a half times what the United States take from us. You may say that the United States have a more hostile tariff against us than Canada has. But if you think for a moment you will remember that if Canada were to leave us she would be pretty certain to adopt the tariff of the United States, and we should not be nationally benefited by that proceeding.

But let us take one other great Colony abroad. Let us take the case of Australia. Australia takes from us on an average £24,500,000—or about the same as the whole of the United States, though its population is only 3,250,000—or at the rate of £7 a head, being more than seventeen times more than the United States with its population of 60,000,000.

I wish to say that, on that ground of commercial interest alone, the question is worthy of the consideration of our great commercial communities. I do not think it receives the consideration it deserves—for this reason. The question of the retention of our Colonies may be opened upon us at any moment by some unforeseen incident. I think I know enough of public opinion in this country to know that it matures slowly, and I believe the Chambers of Commerce would be performing a useful task if they made up their minds to mature public opinion on this question. They might come to a conclusion different from that at which I have arrived; but at any rate, whatever it is, it is well that the Chambers of Commerce of this country should know what their mind is, and should make that mind known. You must remember what it involves. It is not only commercial interests that are involved; it is a narrowing-down of this country to its European possessions. Do not flatter yourselves that, if Canada and Australia were to leave you, you would retain your smaller Colonies. The West Indies would go with Canada; Australia would take in Australasia. As to the Cape, I think you might make up your minds for the secession of the Cape under circumstances such as these.

Well, if you wish to remain alone in the world with Ireland, you can do so. I do not see that you can obtain the great boon of a peaceful Empire, encircling the globe with a bond of commercial unity and peace, without some sacrifice on your part. No great benefit, no such benefit as that, can be obtained without a sacrifice. You will have, I think, to admit the Colonies to a much larger share in your affairs than you do at present. You will have to give them a right to prompt the voice of England when it speaks abroad to a much greater extent than you do at present. You must be prepared for demands, sometimes unreasonable, such as spoiled children sometimes make. You must be prepared, in some respects, to diminish your own insular freedom of action on behalf of your great offspring abroad. But to my mind the sacrifice is worth it. The cause which we call Imperial Federation, for want of a better name, is worthy not merely of the attention of Chambers of Commerce, but of the devotion of the individual



minds of the people of this country. For my part, if you will forgive me this little bit of egotism, I can say from the bottom of my heart that it is the dominant passion of my public life. Ever since I traversed those vast regions which own the sway of the British Crown outside these islands, I have felt that there was a cause which merited all the enthusiasm and energy that man could give to it. It is a cause for which any man might be content to live ; it is a cause for which, if needs be, anyone might be content to die.

At this point it may be convenient to describe briefly Lord Rosebery's attitude towards that feature in all schemes of Imperial Federation which has attracted the closest attention and aroused the fiercest controversy since Mr. Chamberlain, on May 15, 1903, while still a member of Mr. Balfour's Cabinet, made his declaration in favour of re-considering our Free Trade policy and of establishing a Preferential system between the Mother Country and her different Colonies. The plan was still inchoate when, four days afterwards, Lord Rosebery offered his first comments. He had paid a visit to Burnley in order to inaugurate a newly established Chamber of Commerce.

A question had been raised in a very powerful speech the other night, and he was not treating it in any political or critical sense that evening ; but it was a topic of so great importance as regarded the existence and the future of the Empire, as regarded the basis on which it was to rest and its ultimate development, that he was sure it was one of the subjects that the Chamber of Commerce must discuss at a very large meeting. It was not a matter of party politics as yet, and in one sense he did not think that it ever would be a matter of politics as affecting politics as at present existing, because it cut across that line diagonally and not by the ordinary separation of English party lines. Another reason why he would not discuss it politically that night was that he would not hastily reject, without mature consideration, any plan offered on high authority and based on

large experience for really cementing and uniting the British Empire. Their Chamber of Commerce would have to consider this matter apart from the blast of party passion or personal prejudice, because they would have to consider whether any such scheme as that which had been adumbrated offered a real prospect for the unity of the Empire and a better arrangement than that which at present existed. It would have to be considered whether there was any practical scheme possible for having a reciprocal tariff with the Colonies which would have the effect that was expected and which would be workable. It would have to be considered whether the people of this country could be brought to agree to a system which would satisfy the British dependencies. The Chambers of Commerce would have to consider it from an Imperial standpoint.

We were told that we did not do much for the Colonies. But it must be remembered that though we were not able, under our present fiscal system, to give advantages to our Colonies, yet at the same time we bore practically the whole burden of Imperial defence, for which we paid about seventy millions sterling this year; and when the balance was cast that great factor should not be left out of sight, and we should not be told that we were not doing our duty by the Colonies. It would have to be considered from the Imperial point of view whether the system of reciprocal tariffs would really bind the Mother Country more closely with the Colonies than was now the case. The Chamber of Commerce would have to think what the situation might become—how Great Britain might have annually to submit to the pressure of various Colonies who were discontented with the tariff as then modified and wanted it modified still further. If they considered Great Britain as a target at which all these proposals for modification and rectification would be addressed, he thought it would occur to their Chamber that it would not altogether add to the harmony of those relations to have these shifting tariffs existing between Great Britain and her Colonies. Again, from the Imperial point of view, it would have to be considered whether those relations could be modified materially for the better without having direct Colonial representation in some form in the government of this country. One thing was certain—that before any real change was made in our fiscal

system we must, as a practical measure, have a conference around a round table or square table, as the case might be, a private conference, not for the delivery of speeches to the gallery, but a real and business conference between the best financial and commercial experts of this country and of the Colonies, to say whether such a new system of tariffs was practicable and advisable or not.

There was also the commercial aspect. He did not suppose that trade had prospered in every respect as every individual in that hall would wish. Under a system of Free Trade every branch of industry did not prosper. He was interested in the landed industry, and he did not know that the land industry had prospered particularly under Free Trade : but he dismissed his own case, as he knew that the landlord was not a subject of interest except to himself ; but there were, he thought, classes connected with land more important than the landlord ; and he thought it could not be denied that under a system of Free Trade large tracts of country had been turned out of cultivation, that our own food-supply had been diminished, and that the populations which had been reared in the rural districts had ceased to be reared in those districts ; and he feared that they would not be so again reared until some possible change could be devised. He was not, however, going to dwell upon that aspect of the subject to-night. He was only showing them that he was not a person who believed that Free Trade was part of the Sermon on the Mount, and that we ought to receive it in all its rigidity as a divinely appointed dispensation. The figures of our commerce must be remembered, figures so surprising that he did not dare to cite them from memory ; and their Chamber of Commerce would probably ask the question as to whether it was wise without long and deep consideration to change a fiscal system under which such results had been obtained. It must be remembered that, if we quarrelled with or separated materially from the customers who gave us at least two-thirds and possibly three-quarters of our trade—in order to oblige a customer who gave us a quarter or a third—we should not be doing a wise thing in our own interest and not be doing a wise thing even in the interest of our Colonial customer ; because it was possible that, if we were not able to accumulate wealth by the

trade by which we had accumulated it we should not be able to bear the expenditure of seventy millions for defence which we bore in the common interests of the Empire. These topics were worthy of the grave and deliberate considerations of the new body which they were setting on foot. He did not pretend to argue definitely one way or the other ; because, as a very old Imperialist, and a very convinced one, he should not condemn any plan, as he had said before, for the unity of the Empire before he saw that plan practically before him.

There was another point of view from which they would have to regard it, and it was this. He held that Chambers of Commerce ought to be made thinking centres for our policy. Our foreign policy sadly needed thinking power. He was not alluding to any Ministers, past or present or future. It was a matter, to his mind, entirely beyond Ministers, who did their best and worked very hard in doing it. It would be necessary to consider very carefully, therefore, the alteration which would be made in our foreign relations by any such cast-iron boundary round our Empire, any such cast-iron fence of tariff, as that which some thinkers proposed to introduce. It was quite possible that the advantages of such a course in uniting the Empire at large might counterbalance the disadvantages that would have to be weighed against them. Of that he knew nothing. All he pleaded for was that they of that Chamber should carefully weigh the disadvantages in a cool and calculating spirit before they adopted one course or the other in regard to this proposal.

In the general tone of the Burnley speech, though not perhaps in any opinion definitely expressed, it must be admitted that Mr. Chamberlain's supporters had some excuse for claiming Lord Rosebery as, if not a convert, at least open to conversion. It must be remembered, however, that he had spoken to a non-political audience, and that, if he touched upon the subject at all, he was bound, by all the courtesies of public life, not to treat it in a contentious spirit. It is also true that Mr. Chamberlain had not yet developed the Protective side of his programme, having insisted chiefly

on the necessity for retaliation against oppressive foreign tariffs and on the importance of establishing a Preferential system between the United Kingdom and its dependencies. Nevertheless, it was a 'tolerably full-fledged scheme,' and its bearings can hardly have been misunderstood by Lord Rosebery even within the first week of its publication. It is admitted by many persons who have since definitely rallied to the Free Trade standard that at first they were dazzled and fascinated by Mr. Chamberlain's exposition of his idea. To Lord Rosebery the statement must have been especially attractive, since every idea and thought in the Birmingham oration could be paralleled in his own speeches on Imperial Federation. We are, perhaps, not justified in identifying the 'sacrifices' contemplated by Lord Rosebery in 1888 with those recommended by Mr. Chamberlain in 1903, because it is sufficiently evident that, so far as Lord Rosebery and other Liberal members of the Imperial Federation League looked forward to any modification of our fiscal system, they had in view, not a series of separate commercial treaties between the Mother Country and her respective Colonies, but a complete *Zollverein*. Now it is possible for a man to adhere to nearly all the arguments that Free Trade rests upon, and yet to accept a Customs Union within an Empire which includes almost every soil and climate of the habitable globe, and which would, therefore, be self-sufficient. Literally, of course, it is correct to speak of the United States as a Protectionist nation. Practically it is a vast Free Trade area, which produces, or could produce, everything it requires except a few luxuries. It was a *Zollverein* of this sort which had captivated Lord Rosebery's imagination fifteen years ago, and it was, perhaps, because he discerned an approximation to this ideal



that he offered, on 19 May, so tolerant a criticism of Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham on the fifteenth.

This tolerance was keenly resented by the great body of the Liberal party. They were not disposed to look kindly upon any proposal which Mr. Chamberlain fathered, and they had been trained—some by study and thought, others by blind tradition—to regard Free Trade as an unassailable creed. They were shocked, therefore, by Lord Rosebery's profession of readiness to reopen and reconsider the controversy of sixty years before, and though he had spoken no word of direct heresy, he was regarded with some mistrust. Moreover, it was in the special group which he had formed around himself that economic orthodoxy was most rigid. His chief lieutenants in the Liberal League were foremost in the attack on Mr. Chamberlain.

There could be no doubt that, if Lord Rosebery wished to retain any position within the Liberal party, he would have to clear away the suspicions which had gathered about his fiscal reputation. The task of self-explanation was discharged at a banquet of the Liberal League held at the Hotel Cecil on June 12th. It was not an altogether pleasant duty, though his backsliding had been considerably exaggerated. In order to divest the performance of any airs of penance or recantation he commenced by reaffirming the propositions which had caused the scandal, and passed on to show how innocent they were of economic offence. He was still of opinion, he declared, that Free Trade was not a divine dispensation—to be accepted without question or discussion. Free Trade was made for man, not man for Free Trade. Again, he was quite willing that its operation should be made the subject of public inquiry—he believed that investigation would confirm the doctrine. But the

burden of proof lay with the critics of our fiscal system. Had Free Trade failed? If we had found ourselves with a shrinking trade, a diminished revenue, a population on the verge of poverty, we should long ago have reviewed the whole question. Instead of that we had reached, so far as statistics could give us a clue, 'such a pinnacle of wealth' as no nation of the size had attained in the history of the world. Take the Income-tax figures: in 1891-2 the amount paying this tax was £537,000,000. In 1900-1 it had risen to £594,000,000—an increase of £57,000,000 in nine years in the yearly income of the assessed classes. Look at the foreign trade of the country for the previous year—£870,000,000.

But you are told that those figures are nothing; this is not a matter of trade, it is a matter of Empire. I am afraid that without trade you will have no Empire. I remember a story of Lord Beaconsfield, who heard the late Dean Stanley—a most convincing theologian—holding forth against dogma. Lord Beaconsfield heard him with great pleasure for a considerable time, but at last he laid his hand gently on his arm and said, "Yes, that is all very well; but remember—no dogma, no Dean." So when I hear these gentlemen say this is not a mere matter of trade, but a matter of Empire, I think of that story—no dogma, no Dean. No trade, no Empire. Why, you might as well think of this island doing without the Gulf Stream as doing without the fullest amount of trade which it can possibly do with the world at large. I, at any rate, who may be a retrograde politician as belonging to the Liberal League, with all its suspicious surroundings, should lament anything, and I think all who are interested in the prosperity of this country would lament anything, that could divert the greatest possible flow of trade throughout this great mart of the world. I come to my second heresy that I uttered at Burnley—my second platitude, as I call it, because it conveniently divides what I have to say to you. I said then, and I say now, that I will not dismiss with-

out examination, or without learning what it is, any proposition, however wild it may seem at first, which has for its object the closer union of the British Empire. I will go further-- I will say that it is with pain and with grief that I find myself unable to support the scheme, so far as I know it, which has been put forward with that object during the past three weeks. We do not, indeed, know what that scheme is itself. That will require time to develop. But we do know the kind of barren outline of that scheme quite sufficiently to realise what it must be. Indeed, until the colours are filled in by a master-hand, I do not know that the design could be more complete. It is to tax raw materials or food for the benefit of the Colonies, and, of course, I suppose also, for our little population here--to tax raw materials and food in order to cement the Empire together. Now we can narrow that down a little: because the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary have stated that it is impossible to tax--or they consider it impracticable to tax--the raw materials that enter the country. And, therefore, we are limited to a tax on food--a tax on food, followed by a rise in wages which will more than compensate for the enhanced prices of food. Well, I take that as it is stated, and I see that it divides itself into two parts--a hindrance to the food-supply of a teeming and increasing population in a limited area, which has long been accustomed to the most unlimited supply of food; and, in the second place, it means the enhancing of the price of our food by the enhancing of the wages which is to follow the rise in the price of food, and, therefore, a greater difficulty than we have at present with regard to the placing of our manufactured goods, unaccompanied at the same time by benefit to the working classes whose enhanced wages would scarcely meet the enhanced price of food. Well, now, I am not going to labour that point to-night, because the question of the food of the country is one so important that it cannot take a back seat in an after-dinner speech.

But there is a question with regard to the food-supply which I will touch upon, and which is not connected so much with the welfare of the working classes of this country--a point which I should like to treat differently on some future occasion. You come in this question of deriving food-supplies entirely from your

Colonies to the great point which makes in my judgment, at present, and probably for many years to come, perhaps for ever, the question of a Zollverein impossible—and that is the question of distance. The Zollvereins of which you have record, that in Germany, and that which practically exists in the United States of America, are Customs Unions between contiguous areas, large self-contained areas, speaking the same language, having the same currency, within immediate communication of each other, and in fact, except as regards language, in a very different position to the British Empire. How are you to adjust these supplies of corn and food which are to come from the different parts of the Empire? They come at present from Canada, from India, and from Australia. Canada is some 3,000 miles off, India is some 7,000 miles off, Australia is some 13,000 miles off. How are you to make your rates even of your duty between these different competing sources of supply? I suppose you will have to find some advantageous tariff for India as compared with Canada, and some much more advantageous tariff for Australasia as compared with either to compensate for the enormous difference of freights and the enormous distances that these food-supplies will have to come. Why, it does not seem so simple an affair after all, this supplying ourselves with grain from the resources of the Empire alone. You will have at the very first aspect of the matter, in looking at the very elements of the proceeding, to have different tariffs adapted to the different distances that you have to traverse in order to establish fair trade between the different parts of the Empire. Well, I say that it is a preliminary obstacle which has no doubt been considered by a united Cabinet in long and careful deliberation. It is only one of many obstacles. But it is impossible, as I say, to survey this vast question in all its aspects to-night. I only offer that preliminary problem for their investigation. But at any rate, whether that problem be surmountable or not, I think it gives me the right to say, as I do with regard to the fiscal system, that the burden of proof lies with those who would substitute the new arrangement for the present arrangements of the British Empire.

What is the present arrangement? The Empire is built up on Free Trade. And by Free Trade I do not mean, of course, that

there are not multifarious tariffs throughout the Empire. That would show a very elementary ignorance of the situation—a situation which I have studied for many years. It does not mean that there are not tariffs throughout the Empire, but it does mean this—that your Empire is founded on the condition, and it could not have existed until now except on that condition, that every self-governing part of it shall have the right to work out its own prosperity by its own methods. I do not know why it should enter the heads of any statesmen to deny that liberty to the United Kingdom, which, after all, is not an insignificant part of the Empire. The system under which we have lived, that system of free option for every part of the Empire, has enabled us in these islands to bear the great but the grateful burden of Empire, and in that respect at any rate it is surely not to be passed on one side. It has made the heart of the Empire, which is this island, the mart of the world, and it has brought that united state of feeling which led to the remarkable outburst of loyalty during the late war of which we are never weary of boasting, and rightly boasting, but which, I think, in the course of a few weeks we shall be asked to believe was the result of some Protective tariff. Well, then I say that the burden of proof lies with those who would disturb the existing arrangements of the Empire which in different directions have had their fair development and under which it has grown to the present world-wide position which it occupies. If I may say a word to those who endeavour to force the pace with regard to the union of the Empire, I would say that I trust they may never have to write the epitaph of that Empire in the well-known words, ‘I was well, I would be better, and here I am.’ But I do not ask you to accept my view of the present relations of the Empire as being an authoritative one and as being weighty as against the idea of a Protective tariff. I would rather quote from the words of one who, I think, outside these islands has the highest claim to be heard on the subject; and as he is the Prime Minister of the Canadian Dominion as well, I think his words may be entitled to some weight in view of what we hear of the relations of Great Britain and Canada. What did Sir Wilfrid Laurier say, I think five years ago? I think he has been continuously in office ever since, and I have not heard that he



has ever revoked those words. 'There are parties,' he said, 'who hope to maintain the British Empire on lines of restricted trade. If the British Empire is to be maintained it can only be upon the most absolute freedom, politically and commercially. In building up this great enterprise, to deviate from the principles of freedom will be so much to weaken the ties and bonds which now hold it together.' I recommend that passage to the attention of the Colonial Office. I agree, I confess, with Sir Wilfrid Laurier; nor is it from any want of thought that I have come to that conclusion, because it is not one of the recent discoveries of the Colonial Office that the Empire might be united by a bond of trade. I was a member of the old Imperial Federation League—perhaps some of you, some of the hoary-headed ones among you, have been members, too—and we worked out this subject as well as we were able, and we were always met with the absolute and insuperable difficulties which I believe will confront anybody who attempts to deal with it. My view of the policy which is really adapted to raise the strength and prosperity of this Empire is that of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Having quoted the opinion of a 'Times' correspondent that the tie between the little European island and its Colonies could only be strengthened by making that little island as strong and rich as possible, Lord Rosebery said, the 'bribe of Preferential tariffs' might make it poorer, less capable of an effort, and less capable of defending itself.

Well, then, I ask, will this policy have the effect of cementing the Empire? And my answer is that, if carried, it will not probably have that effect, because I may mention incidentally that I cannot conceive—I do not propose to enter at length into the Fiscal Question to-night—that I cannot conceive what are the Colonial markets which are to be offered to us in return for the markets we intend to resign or to forfeit, and that will produce some discontent in this country if not elsewhere. I say, if it is carried, I do not think it will have the effect of cementing the union of the Empire. If it is not carried, the

ineffectual raising of this question will do, perhaps, irreparable damage. We shall have raised expectations which, under the hypothesis I am discussing, are destined to be disappointed. We shall have set on foot discussions eminently detrimental, in my judgment, to what I may call the *moral* of the Empire. We shall have thrown the union of the Empire—a question so sacred that it has always been held aloft—into the base arena of party politics. These are the results that I see from the present method of raising this question, more especially if it be unsuccessfully raised. But suppose by any chance—I confess I do not think it probable—that this policy were successful. Then I will put a different question affecting the most important of all considerations—the risk and damage to our foreign trade, 80 per cent of the whole of our trade on which we live and thrive. That question is a question that ought to be dealt with in a separate speech. But in the case I am imagining we should have, as I conjecture, to meet annually before the preparation of the Budget, with representations from every part of the Empire for a revision of the tariff for their own particular advantage.

. . . . .

I am a sane Imperialist, a lifelong Imperialist, and it is with constant apprehension that I look to anything that may set the Imperial interests of the people of this country in hostility to the idea of Empire. Let me take another point, and it is, I think, a point which has been insufficiently considered. You will, I suppose, stimulate by your Protective tariff, in part it must inevitably be the case, the cultivation of those vast virgin tracts of soil in Canada and possibly also in Australia—but I do not lay so much stress on Australia, as owing to drought the supply of wheat from there must always be fitful—but I will take the case of Canada, and you will stimulate there the ploughing up of great tracts of virgin soil into wheat land. Canada is not exempt from the visitations of Providence any more than any other part of the world. Suppose some calamity occurs in Canada, and she is not able to send you your supply of food. There is not a man in this country who believes that if such a catastrophe occurred it would be possible to close the

ports to the free importation of food stuffs from all over the world. Do you suppose that if you once opened the ports after that experience you would ever close them again? There is not a sane politician who thinks that it would be possible. Sir Robert Peel himself pointed out that no sane man could contemplate such a contingency, and what could not be done in a limited population fifty years ago certainly could not be done in a comparatively unlimited population. But what would your position be, what would the complaint, the just complaint of Canada, be? These people, who had brought their lands under cultivation for the purpose of supplying you with food under a restricted tariff, would probably be ruined, and a great industry would be probably put out of court, destroyed by the action of your Ministry and your Legislature. Why, the grievance of Canada against you would be enormous. Who knows what the feelings of Canada might be after that event had occurred? I do not know, I do not attempt to predict, but I do say I deduce two considerations from that fact. One is, that any such Protective tariff on food-stuffs could not be permanent, and secondly, that it could not conduce to the consolidation of union of the Empire.

Lord Rosebery next turned to the probable effect in the United States. In spite of certain failures and miscarriages in policy, a great and solid understanding with America was growing up, though 'still in its infancy.' But it would be primarily against the United States that this Preferential system would be directed. This consideration alone was enough to throw doubt on the new policy.

Again, the scheme had been propounded in the wrong way. If put forward at all it should have been put forward 'after most careful and secret inquiry.' Moreover, it should have had behind it the authority of a united Cabinet. Having adverted to the disagreements and inconsistencies already manifested within the Government, he asserted that, so far as he understood Mr. Chamberlain's proposals, Lord

Rosebery could conceive nothing so detrimental as they were to the union and prosperity of the Empire, both in their nature and in the manner in which they had been raised.

I speak to-night entirely from the point of view of an Imperialist who has been at work on this question for some three-and-twenty years, and who has naturally not overlooked the bond of union which might be cemented if a Zollverein was possible or practicable. I confess that we who have so worked have regarded with the greatest pride and satisfaction the moral union, the union of sympathy, which has sprung up within the bounds of our Empire, and which produced that great burst of loyalty in the various parts of the Empire at the commencement of the South African War. But now we feel that it has been placed at hazard by forcing the running prematurely, and hastening on a consummation for which the Empire is by no means ripe. What the effect will be on the stability of the Ministry, or even on the welfare of parties, is to me—important as these circumstances are—comparatively a matter of indifference. What may happen to the Ministry or to this or that party is merely a ripple on the sea of time. It cannot in reality affect the great historical course of the nation. What I do tremble to see imperilled is the delicate, the world-wide organisation of the British Empire, that majestic structure, the secular structure on which all the best part of Great Britain—aye, all lovers of progress and freedom in the world outside Great Britain—have laid their surest and their safest hopes.

There could be no further mistake as to Lord Rosebery's attitude. It was a fighting speech, and was recognised as such by his colleagues of the Liberal League. Lord Rosebery had stated, Mr. Asquith said, the ground on which the whole Liberal party were prepared to take part in the great campaign that lay before the country. Sir Henry Fowler declared that the speech was a trumpet note to which the

whole party would respond. From the attitude definitely assumed on 12 June, 1903, Lord Rosebery has made no departure, and it will, therefore, be unnecessary to make further detailed reference to his views on Fiscal policy.



## CHAPTER VIII

Institution of the London County Council—Lord Rosebery elected—Opposition to his Chairmanship—Success with the Progressives—Death of Lady Rosebery—Second Municipal contest—Lord Rosebery member for Finsbury—"Revival of London"—Disavowal of Party aims—Growing unpopularity of the Conservative Government—Liberal campaign—Lord Rosebery at Edinburgh—General Election of 1892—Mr. Gladstone's new Administration—Lord Rosebery's acceptance of Office.

THE chief legislative achievement of 1888 was the Local Government Bill for England and Wales. Roughly, it transferred to the elective County Councils which it had called into being the non-judicial duties hitherto performed by the justices in Quarter Sessions. This change was introduced by the Conservatives, not because they believed that the country gentlemen had proved themselves either inefficient or extravagant, but because the party managers wished to forestall the Liberals—who, no doubt, would deal with the whole question of Local Government in a much more drastic spirit. In order, however, to make an imposing show of thoroughness, the original draft of the Ministerial Bill provided not only for the creation of County Councils, but also contained a scheme of District Government and a set of licensing proposals, which invested local committees with the power of closing public-houses on the payment of due compensation. It was found, however, that the County Council part of the measure was enough for a single Session, especially as the Government insisted on converting "London"—i.e. the metropolitan area outside and

around the City—into a “County,” and treating this fictional unit as if it possessed corporate interests and a common life. This effort of Municipal imagination was regarded with open alarm by most of the Conservatives who had made acquaintance with the opinions and feelings of the great mass of the people in our amorphous capital, and some concession had been yielded to their fears by excluding the City from the new jurisdiction and preserving the rights and privileges of the Lord Mayor and Corporation. At the first election for the London County Council a praiseworthy attempt was made to keep politics out of the contest, but it soon became evident that for all practical purposes there was little or no difference between Progressives and Radicals, on the one hand, or, on the other, between Moderates and Conservatives.

In spite of the extreme views professed by some of the Progressives, the party as a whole were anxious to disarm suspicion and allay the nervousness excited by their advanced Municipal programme. For this purpose they turned, almost instinctively, towards Lord Rosebery. The opinions which he had often expressed on social reform, and his frequently displayed interest in philanthropic enterprises—he was a good Londoner as well as a good Scotchman—rendered him acceptable to the Progressives, while it was hoped that his rank and wealth would shield the whole movement from the imputation of predatory aims. The ignominious termination of the Board of Works’ not altogether unbeneficial career had put most unprejudiced persons out of conceit with the old-fashioned administration of Metropolitan affairs. The genesis of the new authority was, therefore, watched with not unkindly curiosity by persons who were quite innocent of sympathy with any

form of Socialism, and the appearance of Lord Rosebery as candidate for a seat on the Council lent an air of distinction to what might otherwise have been considered a second-class contest.

He was returned for the City, though second to Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury), by a heavy vote, nor had he disdained the ordinary arts of the candidate for election honours. He delivered numerous speeches, and at once succeeded in making himself immensely popular, not only amongst his new constituents, but throughout the County of London. Indeed, his utterances were reported to the newspapers almost as fully as if he had been speaking on some Imperial topic. It has hitherto been his fortune to have a 'good Press.' No public man has been more soundly rated by declared adversaries and candid friends, yet the newspapers, even when they condemn his views and reprobate his conduct, are constrained to report his speeches at considerable length. He has the art of saying things that people wish to read, and, though most of his speeches are too topical to stand the test of republication, they are, for that reason, apt to the moment. In this respect he was never more successful than in his series of appeals for the confidence of the London Progressives.

The proposal to make him Chairman of the Council, however, was not welcome to some of the more extreme members of the Progressive majority—they would have preferred their proceedings to be guided by a member directly connected with the working-classes, and on this ground argued that the office should carry a salary. This, it was thought, would make its occupant more responsive to their views, and there was some reluctance to confer the most democratic office in the country on a Peer,

associated though he was with the movement for converting the hereditary Chamber into a representative body. But no man in England was ever damaged in his career by owning a title—though a few able Peers, conscious of popular gifts, and amongst them Lord Rosebery, have affected to deplore their inheritance. When the question was put to the vote, he was elected to the Chair by more than a hundred votes against seventeen. It was evidence of his personal tact that in a very few days he had established relations of special cordiality with the very group which had opposed his nomination. Indeed, he soon showed that he had taken up Municipal business in earnest, and was equally diligent at the routine business of the Council Committee, and in the full-dress debates held once a week, first at the Guildhall and subsequently at Spring Gardens. He afterwards remarked, with justice, that few of the early critics of Progressive activity had any notion of ‘the labour and drudgery which a conscientious Councillor must give to his work,’ and he described his motives in entering the Municipal arena with as much fidelity as is obtainable by any man who offers to analyse his own conduct. He saw a vast experiment, he said, with enormous possibilities and enormous risks, being, as he thought, somewhat heedlessly launched. Rightly or wrongly, it seemed to him that the public were not aware of its magnitude, and that men of thought, leisure, and business capacity ought to come forward and give their energies to so noble a work, and make it a success. He felt, however, that he could not expect others to do what he shrank from doing himself, and so, ‘very reluctantly, and with a strong sense of unfitness,’ he became a candidate.

When the necessary allowance has been made for a

graceful habit of self-depreciation which is not intended to deceive the public before whom it is practised, it may be conceded that Lord Rosebery's work on the Council was undertaken without any idea of promoting his personal ambition. His political standing in 1888 was second to that of no Liberal statesman except only Mr. Gladstone and, perhaps, Sir William Harcourt, and his entrance into London politics was regarded rather as a condescension than a means of advancement.

In the result, his position was materially strengthened by the judgment and moderation with which he guided, or, perhaps we should say, steadied the action of the predominant party. If he adorned and advertised the Council, he also won a solid backing of enthusiastic and attached supporters. The popularity he won and the confidence he inspired among the advanced Radicals, not in London only, by a few months of strenuous association did not pass away when he withdrew from Municipal activity, nor has his personal following yet been extinguished in a section of the working classes which in other respects has shown no marked sympathy with Liberal Imperialism.

His London work was, however, interrupted in October, 1890, by the death of Lady Rosebery. This cruel bereavement was followed by prolonged insomnia and mental depression. Moreover, he was called away from the Municipal administration in which he had so rapidly proved himself singularly efficient by the demands of party politics. The decaying popularity of the Conservative Government, the revival of Liberal hopes, and the vigorous resumption of Mr. Gladstone's campaign, called for the effective co-operation of the statesman who by universal consent was designated for the office of Foreign



Secretary if the Opposition should carry the day at the General Election. Though he was re-elected to the London County Council, for East Finsbury, in 1892, and consented to take the office of Chairman 'for a few months'—which meant until the General Election—he was unable to play so prominent a part as before in the Progressive movement. Nevertheless, he reaffirmed his faith in the distinctive articles of the party faith—some of which appear to have since been quietly dropped or relegated to a secondary place. In 1892, along with the removal of 'petty and annoying restrictions' on the expenditure of the Council, the right of 'London' to control its water-supply, the readjustment of local taxation, and Municipal management of the police, he advocated what was called the Unification of London—which meant the absorption by the Council of the powers and properties of the Corporation and the City Companies. This he regarded as the most important, as certainly it was the most difficult to realise, of the objects aimed at by the Progressive party.

But it was on the sentimental or philanthropic, rather than the combative, side of the movement that Lord Rosebery preferred to lay stress. Instead of demonstrating by argument the need for increased outlay on public objects, or justifying it by dry financial statistics, he assumed the one point and took the other for granted. A speech which he delivered in Whitechapel was a model of adroitness. He began with a reference to the General Election, and the political languor which had followed it. After the fret and fever of such a contest, he said, public opinion has to be wheeled about in a bath-chair. Its knocker is tied up, it speaks in a whisper, and 'sometimes it makes an expedition and goes altogether

abroad.' But in England, should party politics become 'a mere scene of violence and corruption, slander and malignity,' there is always a safe and solid substratum of public Municipal life. 'When your orators are banging tables and calling each other every kind of name, the Municipal authorities go on providing gas and water, and pavements for their streets, free public libraries, and public baths and washhouses, and do **not** care one farthing about these conflicts that are going on.' From the speaker's words it would be impossible to infer that any question had ever arisen as to the right or duty of a Municipal body to enter into such undertakings or to offer these gratuitous comforts to all-comers.

In the same way, he went on to discuss 'this sudden revival of London,' and promptly, perhaps not unjustly, attributed it to the County Council—i.e. to the Progressive majority. Of course, he was not so inept as to claim the whole credit for that party, but made due acknowledgment of the philanthropic efforts of persons outside the Council. On another occasion, which also was non-political, he declared that, as regarded Municipal life, London had been, before the institution of the Council, 'like Lazarus in the parable,' and only took the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. 'We at last feel that **we** have a centre for our hopes and aspirations, that **we** have a body, industrious, zealous, pure, practical, to which we can look in order to carry out our wishes. There is another quality which has been developed by the new birth of life in London, and that is emulation. The spirit of civic emulation has been aroused, which is a healthy sign in such a commonwealth as ours. When the people's representatives spend the people's money they will not spend too much, and they will endeavour to spend it to the best advantage.'

When the people's representatives spend the people's money they will not spend too much! It would, no doubt, be unfair to describe the sentence as a bundle of disguised fallacies, but it might be an amusing exercise for the young logician to set out all the disputable propositions which it implies, while, perhaps, there is hardly one of them to which Lord Rosebery would deliberately give assent. He has not seldom been betrayed by his facility of expression into untenable declarations, just as other men are led into a different class of blunders by inability to put their thoughts into appropriate words.

It must not be supposed, nor is it here suggested, that the disavowal of party aims which Lord Rosebery has so often made is a mere pose or pretence. He has enlarged on this text ever since he joined in the political fray. In the memoir of Pitt, which he dedicated in 1891 to the memory of Lady Rosebery, it is made a special subject of praise that 'he managed to extinguish Party from this brilliant Administration. He knew that he was fighting a battle, almost for the existence, but certainly for the future, of the country. The nation came to recognise, too, that he was their champion in the battle—that they could trust him; and Parliament met in reality for little more than to register the Votes of Supply that Pitt required to carry on his great enterprise. Well, that is an example we ought never to lose sight of entirely in this country. To such a degree had things arrived that, in a document of the City of London, it is mentioned that four years after Pitt came into power they spoke of the "present happy extinction of parties."'

Such sentiments would admirably become a philosopher or a disappointed politician, but they proceeded rather strangely from the pen of a public man reeking from the

turmoil of a General Election, an active lieutenant of the most combative Prime Minister of the century, and a partner in every scheme and movement of the party to which he had given an unwavering allegiance for fifteen years—having supported it with undeniable chivalry, though, on at least one cardinal point, he was admittedly dissatisfied with its policy.

There was, in fact, nothing in Lord Rosebery's past career—except these occasional exercises in abstract speculation—that could justify the air of detachment which he assumed in regard to the traditional dichotomy of English politics. The one proof of practical belief in such a theory was given in January, 1892, when he declined to stand for the City as a candidate for the London County Council because the election was to be run on party lines. But as he subsequently accepted the seat offered him by the electors of East Finsbury, the demonstration did not prove very much. It is true enough that he has never sought Office, but he went where Office was—and went willingly enough.

From 1889 onwards it had been plain to any cool-headed observer that the next appeal to the country would result in a Liberal victory. The concession of Free Education by Lord Salisbury to the insistent pressure of Mr. Chamberlain and the other Radical Unionists had given deep umbrage to many old-fashioned Conservatives. The fusion of the Unionist party, though its two wings retained separate organisations, had caused jealousy and misgiving amongst politicians who feared that their prospective claims to office might be ignored in favour of their Liberal allies. The exposure of Pigott's forgeries was by no means counter-balanced in the public judgment either by the other findings of the Parnell Commission, by the fierce public light that was thrown upon the private irregularities of the

Nationalist leader, or even by the feud that broke out in his once solid party. The series of conciliatory arrangements by which the Prime Minister had minimised the chances of the conflict with European Powers over undelimited territory in Africa had exposed him to the charge of making bad bargains. The failures, first of Mr. Ritchie and afterwards of Mr. Goschen, to propound an acceptable scheme for reducing the number of public-houses had given the general impression that Lord Salisbury and his colleagues were incompetent in their treatment of domestic affairs—an impression which was seriously strengthened by the draft of their Local Government Bill for Ireland. Fairly or unfairly, all these influences told strongly against the Government, and far outweighed the credit due to them for an important body of useful, if unpretentious, accomplishment in social reform.

It is obvious to those who are wise after the event that Lord Salisbury made a tactical mistake in postponing the General Election to the summer of 1892. A prolonged term of suspense is, as a rule, demoralising to the defence, while the spirits of the attacking party are raised by expectation. Among the most vigorous assailants of the Government was Lord Rosebery. Speaking at Edinburgh on 12 May, he affected to regret his return to active politics. But on the eve of a great crisis he was unwilling to have it thought that his retirement was due to any loss of faith in Liberal principles or want of loyalty to the policy in which he had taken part. After dealing gently with the question of Scottish Home Rule, he passed on to Labour problems. Some of these, he considered, were not yet ripe for solution, but he favoured a certain amount of experimental legislation. Unless the Liberal party recognised this necessity, it would



find itself, when next it obtained power, out of touch with the great mass of the people. On the Irish Question he spoke out strongly. He fastened on Mr. Balfour's excuse for having occasionally suspended the system of trial by jury—that the only object of the system was the administration of justice, and if that end were obtained in any other way it was equally good. That observation, Lord Rosebery said, showed fundamental ignorance of every rule of English jurisprudence and every idea of British liberty. He quoted Lord Salisbury as evidence that after five or six years of the 'resolute government' which he had postulated Ireland was still 'a hostile country.' Turning on the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Balfour, he pointed out that they declared that Home Rule would not be before the country at the next Election. But Land Purchase and Free Education had been before the country at the last Election, and the Tories had promised that they would resist both with the last breath in their bodies. Yet when they had been five years in office, they had passed both. Lord Salisbury was attacked for his tortuous and incomprehensible treatment of the Roman Catholic Question. Sometimes, with more than pedantic arrogance, he excommunicated the Catholics of the south-eastern part of Ireland from any benefits in their Church. At other times he said he hated any interference of ecclesiastics in political matters, and in the same sentence laid his homage at the feet of the Pope for having interfered in Ireland from his own point of view. Again, he told the men of Ulster, that if they chose to rise against a Home Rule measure, they would not lack countenance from the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Ireland. He was the security for the public peace of the country, and every word he uttered might cause a dislocation. It was

uncomplimentary to Lord Salisbury's sincerity that there had not been a violent fall in the public securities! There had been in that generation no darker or more sinister contribution to the history of Ireland. This dark and desperate appeal was the final outcome of a Government of repression out of harmony with the nation. Lord Salisbury was tolling his own knell when he meant only to sound the tocsin that would call the nation to war.

If that was not a party speech it would be difficult, even in the angry politics of the period, to find an utterance that would justify the epithet. Yet Lord Rosebery bettered it a few days later at Birmingham. Having invaded Mr. Chamberlain's district (21 May), he began by paying a graceful and quite sincere compliment to the civic services of the Radical Unionist statesman. But by the weight of his personality Mr. Chamberlain had transformed Birmingham from the foremost town of Liberalism to the pocket borough of a Tory Government. Yet Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Matthews had been among the earliest and most strenuous of English Home Rulers. Without saying that the leaders of the party had entered into a foul conspiracy, without speaking of their shameless apostasy, and without, when all other words failed, calling them knaves, Lord Rosebery argued that Home Rule should at least be discussed since it affected Birmingham as deeply as it affected Ireland. While Home Rule blocked the way Birmingham would get no Liberal measures effectively supported by its representatives. The representation of Birmingham recalled the condition of a bird tied to a string by a bad boy. The bird was occasionally allowed to sing the old notes of freedom and to wave its wings: the moment it got a certain height from the wrist it

was pulled back again. A 'policy of twitter and flutter'—rather melancholy to the bystander and 'infinitely tragic to the bird.' Those who worshipped the Act of Union were following a phantom, and fighting for the remnant of a futile and discreditable transaction. Home Rule would be a test question at the next General Election. The great mass of the people had made up their minds. But the Government had an alternative policy which was embodied in their Local Government Bill then before Parliament—a measure to which Mr. Chamberlain had given a not very enthusiastic support. Nevertheless, the proposal was welcome because it put before the country a definite issue—the Local Government Bill of Ministers or the Home Rule Bill of the Opposition. But the former did not touch the fringe of the subject. It was part of the eternal misconception of Tory and Unionist policy in regard to Ireland. They gave Ireland not what she wanted, but what she ought to want.

A Liberal Government could not be indifferent to the claims of Ulster. They would not be selling her into slavery because they invited her to take her part and share in Ireland from which she had reaped so much prosperity. The secret of the British Empire lay in equal liberty and equal justice. There was no other British-speaking state in the world into which Ministers would venture to introduce the provisions of the Local Government Bill (Lord Rosebery was here alluding to the part of the Bill which the Nationalists called 'the put-them-in-the-dock clause,' and which was intended to provide against maladministration by local authorities). In every British-speaking state prevailed freedom—free Parliaments, free discussion, and, above all, justice. The rule of England in Ireland had

corrupted both countries. But the moment was not far distant when the Liberal party proposed to settle the question of Ireland once and for all.

From these and other speeches delivered at this time it is clear that Lord Rosebery had once again thrown himself heartily into the political turmoil. On 28 June, the day on which the writs were issued for the General Election, he dedicated himself, as it were, to Imperial politics by resigning the chairmanship of the London County Council. Evidently he felt no doubt as to the attitude of the country, and made sure that he would have no leisure for Municipal work. The results did not bear out the estimates of sanguine Liberals; the defeat of the Conservatives, though decisive, was not crushing. The voting was somewhat chequered, for though the Unionists lost 81 seats, they gained 26. The English Home Rulers came back 275 strong, and with the 81 Nationalists would have a majority of 42 over the combined strength of the Conservatives (268) and the Liberal Unionists (46): 356 against 314.

"Too small," said Mr. Gladstone when he was told the figures, "too small." Obviously, too small a majority for passing measures of organic reconstruction such as were contemplated in the Newcastle Programme of 1890. Too small either to ensure victory in the House of Commons or to intimidate the Peers. Nevertheless the Liberals did not hesitate to press their advantage, and when the new Parliament met on 4 August an amendment to the Address was moved and carried by Mr. Asquith. On the division being taken on 11 August the Government were beaten by 40 votes. Four days later Lord Salisbury resigned, and Mr. Gladstone was summoned by the Queen to form a

new Administration. He combined the office of First Lord of the Treasury with that of Lord Privy Seal, and Lord Rosebery, who had gone away on a yachting trip, was invited to become Foreign Secretary. At first he made excuses on the plea of his health, which had not yet been restored, but the real ground of his hesitation was, no doubt, that Mr. Gladstone, Mr. John Morley, and other leading Liberals had recently used language that pointed to an early evacuation of Egypt. It was on the understanding that in this respect he should be allowed to act on his own judgment that he consented to throw in his fortunes with the Administration.

The other most important appointments were those of Sir William Harcourt (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Mr. John Morley (Chief Secretary), Mr. Campbell-Bannerman (War Office), and Lord Spencer (Admiralty). Lord Herschell was made Lord Chancellor; Lord Ripon took the Colonies and Lord Kimberley India. The remaining members of the Cabinet were Mr. Asquith (Home Secretary), Mr. Bryce (Chancellor of the Duchy), Sir G. Trevelyan (Scotland), Mr. Arnold Morley (Post Office), Mr. Mundella (Trade), Mr. Henry Fowler (Local Government), Mr. Arthur Acland (Vice-President of Council), and Mr. Shaw-Lefevre (First Commissioner). The most surprising nomination in the above list was that of Mr. Bryce to an unimportant sinecure. He had accepted the office, it was understood, in order that he might be able to assist Lord Rosebery, who had not yet recovered his energy and buoyancy of spirit, though, as we have seen, he could successfully brace himself, when occasion demanded, for a special effort in polemical oratory.



## CHAPTER IX

Lord Rosebery at the Foreign Office—The British Occupation of Egypt—Question of Evacuation—Previous negotiations—The young Khedive's bid for independence—Prompt action of Great Britain—Telegrams between Lord Rosebery and Lord Cromer—Crisis settled—Great Britain and France—Lord Rosebery and M. Waddington—Indications of future British policy.

It was well that Lord Rosebery went to the Foreign Office with something like a free hand in regard to Egypt. He had only been installed a few months in Downing Street when the trouble which for some little time had been brewing suddenly became critical. Before we pass judgment, however, on Mr. Gladstone for having expressed his hope (in 1891) that Great Britain would before long be relieved from a 'burdensome and troublesome Occupation,' it should be remembered that our position on the Nile—a position which was then a long distance from being regularised by international compacts—was a bone of frequent contention with France. The statesmen of the Republic were still smarting under the sense of their blunder in having broken up the Anglo-French condominium, and permitted us to undertake single-handed the work of restoring order in 1882. The pledges which we had given and repeated, under two Administrations, as to withdrawing our troops on the first safe opportunity were, it is true, conditional, but they were absolutely explicit. So clear was the obligation that in 1887 Lord Salisbury had made an attempt to carry it out—at least, in part. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was

sent to confer with the Sultan as to our eventual evacuation of the country, and proposed that his Majesty should recognise the independence of the country, retaining only a nominal suzerainty. Some of the extra-territorial privileges enjoyed by foreigners were to be modified. The territory was to be neutralised under the guarantee of the Great Powers, who, in return, would be given the right of moving their troops either through the Canal or by land. On the other hand, the British Government should have the nomination of the majority of the officers in the Khedive's army, and, after it had withdrawn its troops, should retain the right of reoccupying the country in case of necessity. On these terms we were prepared to terminate our Occupation.

Happily, this offer, which sufficiently proved the honesty of our intentions, did not satisfy either the Porte or the French Government. A further concession was afterwards suggested by Lord Salisbury. We would limit the Occupation to three years from date, and would define beforehand the conditions under which we should assert the right of re-entry. Even this—a great advance on the previous proposal—was rejected by the Sultan, while France, of course, saw in the proposal an insuperable barrier against its ultimate policy. The object of getting British troops out was to get French troops in. After the refusal of our second offer, there was nothing more to be done—at least for the present. Nevertheless, we were still bound by our conditional engagement; and our delay in giving effect to the promise, though the withdrawal of the garrison would have thrown the whole of Egypt back into anarchy and corruption, was said to lend fresh colour to the traditional imputations on the good faith of Great Britain.

It is hardly too much to say that we owe our now legitimated and recognised position on the Nile to the Mahdi's rebellion. If he had been 'smashed' by Gordon we should very soon have surrendered our trust, but year after year brought accumulating evidence that the helpless civilisation of Egypt could only be protected by foreign help against the very efficient barbarism of the Soudan.

It may as well be admitted also that the opinion grew in England that we were morally entitled to ignore an undertaking which ought never to have been entered into, and could only be fulfilled by jeopardising our interests in the East. The one European Power that would derive advantage from our withdrawal had deliberately refused to share in the risk and cost of instituting and maintaining a stable government, while to yield to the insistent demand of France would have a very unpleasant air of giving way to menace. The diplomacy of Paris was not conducted either in a conciliatory spirit or by straightforward methods. Moreover, it had shown itself almost contemptuously indifferent to the welfare of the people for whom we were making considerable sacrifices. In short, we could point to half a dozen excellent reasons for not doing what we did not wish to do. The increasing reluctance in England to abandon control of the short route to India was not confined to Conservatives. It was shared by many Liberals who could not have described themselves as Imperialists, and they looked confidently to Lord Rosebery to represent their views in the Cabinet.

The occasion was not long in coming. In the last days of December, 1892, the news was received from Lord Cromer that Mustapha Pasha Fehmy, the Egyptian Prime Minister, was suffering from congestion of both lungs, and

that the young Khedive was already thinking of appointing a successor. Mustapha was a manageable man, and it was important that the next Prime Minister should not be anti-British. The best solution, Lord Cromer telegraphed, would be the appointment of Riaz Pasha, who was the only Mohammedan in Cairo possessing any influence. But our Representative did not propose to interfere directly unless some 'highly objectionable appointment' were proposed.

The right of the British Government to offer advice to the Khedive, and to see that it should be accepted, had been emphatically asserted by Lord Granville in 1884, when the Ministry of Chérif Pasha had declined to concur in the abandonment of the Soudan, but wished to 'protect the Upper Nile, including Khartoum'—an object which they hoped to attain by 'the retrocession of the Eastern Soudan and the Red Sea shores to the Sublime Porte'; and as they held firmly to this policy they were compelled, on 7 January, to resign. The position of the British Government had been explained by Lord Granville, in a telegram of three days before: 'I need hardly point out,' he wrote, 'that in important questions, when the administration and safety of Egypt are at stake, it is indispensable that her Majesty's Government should, as long as the provisional occupation of the country by English troops continues, be assured that the advice which, after full consideration of the views of the Egyptian Government, they may feel it their duty to tender to the Khedive should be followed. It should be made clear to the Egyptian Ministers and Governors of Provinces, that the responsibility which, for the time, rests on England, obliges her Majesty's Government to insist on the adoption of the policy which they recommend, and that it will be necessary

that those Ministers and Governors who do not follow this course should cease to hold their offices.' To this principle the Khedive (Tewfik) promptly assented. He not only 'accepted cordially' the policy of the British Government as to the Soudan—which, on mature reflection, he believed to be best in the interests of the country—but added that he 'had thorough confidence that any advice given by Her Majesty's Government would be in the true interests of Egypt.' This happened in 1884, and so long as Tewfik Pasha lived, there was no serious misunderstanding between the British authority and the Egyptian Government. But in 1892 he died, and his successor, Abbas Pasha, was a lad of eighteen, who, not unnaturally, made a bid for independence. He had fallen under dubious influences, but the insubordination which came to a head at the beginning of 1893 had been foreseen and provided against.

From the brevity of the telegrams so briskly exchanged between Lord Cromer and Lord Rosebery [cf. Further Correspondence respecting the Affairs of Egypt, No. 1, 1893, C. 6849] it is evident that the two men had thoroughly agreed on the proper line of policy, and relied on each other's help and support. Not inopportunately, while the political crisis was at its height in Cairo, came the news of smart Dervish raids in the Soudan, and the loss inflicted on the Khedive's troops may have helped to quench his incipient rebellion against the protecting Power. Nevertheless he persisted in the claim to appoint his own Prime Minister, and after the post had been offered to Tigrane Pasha, and declined by him, Lord Cromer was informed, on 15 January, that Mustapha Pasha Fehmy had been dismissed and Fakhry Pasha named in his place. Fakhry, it should be noted, had been a member of the anti-British Ministry



of Chérif Pasha, which, as we have seen, was dismissed in 1884. He had subsequently been Minister of Justice, and again dismissed, at Lord Cromer's instance, as being opposed to Judicial Reform.

His appointment, therefore, was eminently unacceptable to Great Britain. Lord Cromer, accordingly, visited the Khedive and delivered a strong protest. He pointed out to his Highness that no change was necessary, since Mustapha's health had improved. To the changes which were proposed in the Ministries of Finance and Justice, Lord Cromer offered no objection, but as to the Premiership he wished to impress very strongly on her Majesty's Government the importance of the question.

How concisely business may be conducted between statesmen who understand each other will appear from the following messages:—

*The Earl of Rosebery to Lord Cromer.*

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 16, 1893.*

Your telegram of yesterday.

Her Majesty's Government expect to be consulted in such important matters as a change of Ministers. No change appears to be at present either necessary or peremptory. We cannot, therefore, sanction the proposed nomination of Fakhry Pasha.

*Lord Cromer to the Earl of Rosebery.*

(Received January 16.)

CAIRO, *January 16, 1893.*

I hear rumours from a fairly good source that if the Khedive is successful in his present undertaking, the next step will be a wholesale dismissal of English officials.

The latter, acting on my instructions, have declined to recognise new Ministers pending receipt of instructions from London.

*Lord Cromer to the Earl of Rosebery.*

(Received January 17.)

CAIRO, January 17, 1893.

I propose to make communication contained in your Lordship's telegram of the 16th to-morrow morning.

On the receipt of this last telegram, Lord Cromer at once called on the Khedive, and told him that he could have his own way as to the Ministers of Finance and Justice if he would reinstate Mustapha as Prime Minister. 'In the contrary event' Lord Cromer must reserve the liberty of action of her Majesty's Government as regards all those Ministers. He did not think it fair to press for an immediate reply, but would call for one next morning. It was not yet too late to yield, and Lord Cromer earnestly hoped he would do so, 'as otherwise matters might become more serious and complicated.'

This representation was sufficiently explicit, but the Khedive as yet had given no indication at this interview as to the nature of his decision. While he was hesitating came Lord Rosebery's telegram to Lord Cromer.

Your Lordship should inform the Khedive, in case of his refusing to take your advice, that his Highness must be prepared to take the grave consequences of his act, and that you must at once refer to her Majesty's Government for instructions.

The next day the crisis had been solved. On Lord Cromer's paying the promised visit, the Khedive 'expressed his regret at the occurrence of the present incident,' but pointed out that it would humiliate him and make him lose all his authority in the country if he were obliged to reinstate Mustapha. He therefore begged her Majesty's Government not to insist on that point, but was prepared to name Riaz in place of Fakhry. He added that 'it

was his earnest wish to entertain most friendly relations with the British Government,' and for the future he would be willing to follow its advice on all important matters. Lord Cromer undertook, on the spot, to accept this submission as a final settlement of the matter, and asked for the approval of her Majesty's Government. This was accorded by a telegram sent off the same day by Lord Rosebery, who asked Lord Cromer to inform the Khedive that 'the sound judgment exercised by his Highness in retracing the untoward course which he had taken' was gratifying to her Majesty's Government, who noted with pleasure the solemn assurance of his desire to work in cordial co-operation with them, and follow their advice in all matters of importance.

It was, no doubt, an easy matter to crush the insubordination of a ruler who had no army to defend him, but at this time we were dealing not so much with the Khedive as with the French Government. On the day on which Lord Rosebery had despatched his resolute message to Lord Cromer, he had been called upon by the Ambassador of the Republic, who protested against what seemed like a claim on the part of Great Britain to nominate the Khedive's Prime Minister. 'I said,' he informed our Ambassador in Paris, 'that that was not the way I should put the matter,' but Great Britain did claim to give 'authoritative advice as to the choice of Ministers.' So long as the British flag was in Egypt, and British forces were in occupation, we could not allow the whole administration, beginning at the top, to be 'reversed at the whim of the Khedive.' The situation was undoubtedly grave, and he trusted that the Khedive might be brought to a 'more reasonable frame of mind' without 'further measures.'

This was a polite intimation to France that we intended to manage our own business in Egypt without any kind of interference. Nevertheless, the French Ambassador was instructed to try the effect of further pressure. The story is told by Lord Rosebery in another despatch to Lord Dufferin:—

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 18, 1893.*

At a further interview with the French Ambassador to-day, his Excellency stated that he was instructed by his Government to lay a formal protest against the action taken by Lord Cromer with regard to the nomination of Fakhry Pasha as Prime Minister in Egypt. What the French Government chiefly objected to was the high-handed nature of the proceeding. It amounted to this, that the Khedive was not to appoint any Minister except at the good-will and pleasure of her Majesty's Government. Such an event was unprecedented in the history of the British Occupation. It went, in the opinion of the French Government, far beyond the terms of Lord Granville's despatch and would, his Excellency feared, be taken throughout Europe, as in France, to be a long step in the direction of actual annexation.

As regards the nature of the proceeding, I said in my reply to M. Waddington that I was aware that there had been some high-handedness; but that it had been on the part of the Khedive, who, without notice, warning, or consultation, had selected as his Prime Minister a person notoriously unfitted for the position. To admit such a pretension would be to deprive the British Occupation of any reason for existence, as it would open the door to the very maladministration to prevent which this country had, in concert with France, intervened in Egypt. For, as a matter of fact, if his Highness had 'carte blanche' to appoint whom he pleased to any post in the Administration, beginning at the top, there would be no safeguard whatever against the return of the worst abuses which existed under the régime of the ex-Khedive Ismail.

His Excellency had said that the proceeding was unprecedented, and indeed it was so for one obvious reason. It had

never happened in the reign of the Khedive Tewfik, for, though the Prince had often changed his Ministers, he had always been wise enough to take the British Representative into his counsel. And when his Excellency spoke of the high-handed nature of Lord Cromer's proceeding, I was at a loss to understand his meaning. The Khedive had named an unacceptable Minister, and Lord Cromer, on the grounds I had mentioned, had entered a protest. At any rate, when his Excellency called to mind the express object for which he had sought the present interview, he could hardly contend that a protest was in itself a high-handed proceeding.

Throughout the affair, the Khedive had, no doubt, been acting on the advice of French agents, and he only yielded when he discovered at the last moment that he would receive no practical support from the Republic. Its assistance would be moral, not material. Even now, however, we could not regard the matter as quite at an end. Lord Rosebery had pointed out on the 17th to Lord Cromer that we must be prepared for the recurrence of similar incidents, and on the 19th Lord Cromer had replied that, though the Khedive's language and demeanour had been 'satisfactory,' there was still room for apprehension about the situation. A large number of natives had been calling on his Highness, and demonstrations had been held, while the ultra-Mohammedan press was 'very violent and mischievous.' The British garrison was not sufficiently strong, and Lord Cromer would like to 'announce at once' that it would be increased. The next day came Lord Rosebery's reply that the British Government would be prepared to increase the garrison if the necessity should arise.

At this point, however, Lord Rosebery had to contend with a new set of adversaries—certain members of the Cabinet who had been watching, with not altogether



admiring eyes, his summary treatment of the political crisis in Cairo. The telegram of the 20th was not an unconditional promise. It was not until the 23rd that Lord Rosebery was able to announce definitely that, 'in view of recent occurrences,' and the opinion expressed by Lord Cromer and the British General in command, the garrison would be increased. The consent of the doubting Ministers had only been obtained on condition that the announcement which would be made to the other Great Powers should be coupled with a declaration that the measure did not indicate any alteration of policy, or any modification of the assurance which the British Government had from time to time given in regard to the occupation of Egypt. The French Government, while observing all the courtesies of diplomacy, did not disguise its annoyance. On the 25th a formal protest was handed to Lord Rosebery by M. Waddington. After acknowledging the communication from Great Britain, and taking note of the statement that no alteration of policy was signified by the increase of the garrison, the document proceeded :—

En effet, au moment où il a cru devoir occuper l'Egypte, à la suite de l'insurrection d'Arabi, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté a pris l'engagement que cette occupation ne durerait pas au delà des événements qui l'avaient provoquée. Toutes les fois que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté a été interrogé depuis il a renouvelé expressément ces assurances et cet engagement.

Toutefois, il est à craindre que le projet du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté d'augmenter la garnison Anglaise en Egypte ne soit interprété dans un sens directement opposé à ses intentions. Aussi suis-je chargé de demander à votre Seigneurie de bien vouloir préciser les incidents qui auraient motivé cette mesure. Après la communication que Lord Dufferin vient de faire à M. Develle, le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté comprendra que si, contre notre attente, des troubles venaient à se produire en

Egypte, le Gouvernement de la République se réserverait d'examiner, d'accord avec les Puissances et avec Sa Majesté le Sultan, les mesures qu'il y aurait à prendre pour sauvegarder les intérêts qui nous sont communs avec toutes les Puissances garantes de l'indépendance de l'Empire Ottoman.

The last sentence was almost a menace, but Lord Rosebery, with excellent judgment, ignored it. This was, indeed, the only way of dealing with an awkward point, since, on grounds of international law, it could not be denied that the French Government did possess the right which it claimed to exercise in conjunction with 'the other Powers guaranteeing the independence of the Ottoman Empire.' Lord Rosebery forwarded the Note to the British Ambassador in Paris, and describes his own manner of receiving it:—

After reading it I observed to M. Waddington that, without entering on any matter in his Note that might be debatable, I perceived that its main purport was to press that I should state with greater precision ('préciser') the causes which had led her Majesty's Government to take this step. I should, I remarked, have no difficulty in doing this, for the causes were simple in the extreme. In the first place, it was necessary to observe that so long as the British flag was in Egypt we were held responsible for public order. Should, then, a riot take place, we might be called to account for the losses sustained by the subjects of other Powers resident in Egypt, which would be a serious matter. It was also necessary to remember that in a time of popular excitement some insult might be offered to the British uniform or to the British flag which might compel an intervention of a very different and more formidable character: one, indeed, that might raise the Egyptian question in its most acute phase. Moreover, very recently the Egyptian Government had asked the Powers for their consent to the increase of the native army by 2,000 men, a request which had been refused. Almost simultaneously the Dervishes had invaded

Egypt, and the result had been a sanguinary contest of doubtful issue between the Khedive's troops and those of the Khalifa. All these circumstances, the necessity of precaution against riot, the renewed activity of the Dervishes, and the refusal of the increase in the Egyptian army, had led her Majesty's Government to examine more closely the number of their force—for I could not call it an army—which had been reduced to the lowest possible limit; and, prevention being commonly better than cure, they had determined, as a precautionary measure, to increase the number, which now stood at about 3,000 men, by two battalions.

M. Waddington inquired whether we had any reason to apprehend riots.

I told his Excellency that I could offer no opinion. But there had no doubt been some effervescence observable in the populace, and in an Eastern people, liable to fanatical and other obscure influences, one could never tell how soon a smouldering spark might leap into a sudden flame.

His Excellency thanked me and said he would instantly transmit a Report of our conversation to his Government.

A full explanation of British policy was given in a despatch dated 16 February, 1893, in which Lord Rosebery made a brief recital of the measures he had taken to vindicate the principle laid down by Lord Granville in 1884—a principle which in 1893 had for the first time been called into question and 'was for a moment openly set aside by the present Khedive.' Though the attempt had since been abandoned, and promises given that it would not be renewed, it was not prudent to assume positively that all prospect of future trouble was therefore at an end. (In fact, both in 1894 and 1895 a certain revival of unpleasantness had to be checked by the summary action of Lord Cromer, vigorously supported, as before, by Lord Rosebery.)

In the event of further serious trouble, Lord Rosebery

went on, the question might be raised whether it was advisable that the Occupation should be maintained. But against bringing it to a close in such circumstances certain elementary considerations were opposed.

'Firstly,' wrote Lord Rosebery, 'it is necessary to consider the important interests, and indeed the safety, of the large European community in Egypt. Secondly, it is by no means clear that the real feeling, even of the native population in the country, is otherwise than friendly and grateful, although it may be difficult to elicit any public or decisive expression of it. It would not be right or proper that the policy of this country, based on considerations of permanent importance, should be modified in deference to hasty personal impulse or to ephemeral agitation among certain classes. Thirdly, it seems impossible lightly, and on the first appearance of difficulties, to retire from the task which was publicly undertaken in the general interest of Europe and civilisation, and to abandon the results of ten years of successful effort in that direction. And, fourthly, the withdrawal of the British troops under such circumstances would too probably result in a speedy return to the former corrupt and defective systems of administration, and be followed by a relapse into confusion which would necessitate a fresh intervention under still more difficult circumstances, though it is not now necessary to discuss the particular form which that intervention might assume. All these considerations point to the conclusion that for the present there is but one course to pursue; that we must maintain the fabric of administration which has been constructed under our guidance, and must continue the process of construction without impatience, but without interruption, of an administrative and judicial system, which shall afford a reliable guarantee for the future welfare of Egypt.'

In a few significant words Lord Rosebery showed that his own solution of the difficulty would be something very different from the policy of evacuation. Circumstances might arise, he discreetly hinted, which might render it necessary to consider the expediency of fresh consultations

with the Suzerain and with the European Powers. But it would serve no useful purpose to discuss at present proposals which it might hereafter be desirable to bring forward. We may fairly conjecture that what Lord Rosebery had in his mind was to obtain, without any breach of the obligations into which we had entered, a fuller mandate and a less fettered discretion in dealing with the affairs of Egypt. The realisation of that idea was more than ten years distant, and was to be accomplished by other hands than those which had guided Great Britain and Egypt through this dangerous crisis. The action of Lord Rosebery had infringed none of the tenable claims of any other Power, and justified no charge against our good faith. At the same time it had sensibly strengthened our indeterminate position in Egypt, and prepared the way for the subsequent achievement of British arms and British diplomacy. Moreover, it extinguished, once for all, the movement in England for withdrawing from our tutelary obligations and almost vested interests in the Valley of the Nile.

It would, of course, be absurd to claim for Lord Rosebery the entire credit of this adroit and courageous passage in the history of the Foreign Office. At each step forward he consulted with Lord Cromer, and at every point it is evident, even from the reticent pages of Official Correspondence, that the two partners in a complicated game played carefully each into the other's hand. The Foreign Secretary strengthened the British Representative's cards as against the Franco-Egyptian intrigue, and the British Representative, in return, enabled the Foreign Secretary to apply the necessary pressure to hesitating or recalcitrant colleagues in the Cabinet. It was fortunate, perhaps, that those politicians who were most hostile to extending our responsibilities and



developing our authority abroad were so deeply involved in the fortunes of the Home Rule Bill for Ireland that every other issue was, for the time, secondary in their estimation. On no account were they willing to take such action as would result in a Ministerial crisis that might destroy the chances of the great domestic measure on which they were resolved. Lord Rosebery, therefore, was master of the situation, and used his advantage to the best effect.

## CHAPTER X

British position in Uganda—Cabinet differences—Sir Gerald Portal's mission—Railway to Victoria Nyanza—Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt—Attempt to improve the Anglo-German Convention—Reasons of the failure—French aggression on the Upper Nile—Marchand's expedition—Attitude of the British Government—Significant warning—Trouble in Siam—High-handed action of France—Dangers of conflict—Lord Rosebery's diplomacy—War between China and Japan—British mediation suggested—Attitude of the Great Powers—Lord Rosebery's reply to criticisms—On Continental suspicions—Treaty of Shimonoseki—Hostile combination of Russia, Germany, and France—Coercion of Japan—Attitude of Great Britain—Lord Rosebery justified—Difficulties with the South African Republic—Mr. Krüger's policy—Persecution of Armenians—Action of Lord Rosebery.

IF Lord Rosebery had certain difficulties to surmount within the Cabinet in regard to Egypt, they were trifling in comparison with the resistance offered to his policy of strengthening British control over Uganda. In June, 1892, the directors of the British East Africa Company announced that they had finally decided to withdraw from a region which the late Sir Henry Stanley described as the pearl of Central Africa, but which had shown no indication of paying, or becoming likely to pay, for the expenses of administration. Here, again, French ambitions, though in a very different guise, had been working against British influence. For some years the domain of King Mwanga had been made the battle-ground of religious feuds. The British Protestants were first in the field, and resented the subsequent settlement of French Jesuits. Presently, how-

ever, the two Christian sects joined hands against the Mohammedans, but after routing the Pagans renewed their mutual animosities. It was the duty of Captain (Sir Frederick) Lugard, the Company's administrator, to keep the peace between the two factions, and, as the Chartered Company were evidently weary of a profitless outlay, the French party began to hope that they might found a Roman Catholic State in Central Africa, especially as they had acquired influence over the King. A certain sort of order was maintained by Captain Lugard's threat to use the force at the Company's disposal against whichever party should attack the other; but the condition of the country was considerably more disturbed than before it became the prey of Christian feuds—if we can apply the name of Christians to bloodthirsty savages who adopted one faith or another simply as an excuse for waging war against a rival sect. So things dragged on—from bad to worse. But at this time the great nations of Europe were actively engaged in the 'scramble for Africa'; and in this country a strong feeling had grown up that we should not abandon such hold as we possessed on a district that might offer a new market to British industry, and certainly possessed a romantic, if somewhat sinister, interest. Nor must we overlook the influence of religious Scotland, which keenly resented the suggestion of withdrawing from any part of a region where so many of its sons had carried on the work of spreading the Gospel among the heathen.

All these considerations told strongly in Lord Rosebery's mind, and he was resolved to use every means for keeping Uganda. Mr. Gladstone, however, did not conceal his disgust at being 'dragged into Central Africa' through the quarrels of 'those wretched missionaries.' He did not

realise how immediate was the need for preventing our being forestalled by foreign rivals in the region of the Upper Nile, while, not unreasonably, he was somewhat incredulous as to the mercantile possibilities of Uganda and the neighbouring countries. Almost universal as was Mr. Gladstone's intellectual curiosity, his African geography was scarcely up to date, and at first, no doubt, he agreed with the members of his Cabinet who protested against our involving ourselves in what seemed a dangerous and costly enterprise. Nevertheless, he was somewhat influenced by Sir Henry Stanley's vigorous advocacy, both in public and private, and eventually he allowed Lord Rosebery to have his way. Friendly pressure was brought to bear on the directors of the Chartered Company—who naturally wished to dispose of their plant and stores to the Government—and in October they announced that they would further postpone their contemplated evacuation to the end of the year. Sir Gerald Portal was appointed British Commissioner, and instructed to report on the best means of administering the country. He was to establish friendly relations with the King, and to effect a general settlement of the country so as to promote the interests of good order, civilisation, religion, and British trade. Sir Gerald, prompt and resourceful in his dealings with African natives, had very soon reduced anarchy to what might pass for law and order. Early in the following year the Company were bought out by the Government, and the administration was formally taken over by the Foreign Office. By agreement with King Mwanga on 29 April, 1894, a Protectorate was proclaimed, which included the whole of Uganda and a portion of Unyoro—the rebel chief Kabarega having been put to flight.

It had been argued from the first by the advocates of annexation that no serious measures for the improvement or exploitation of Uganda could be undertaken until a railway had been constructed from the East Coast of Africa to the Lakes. This project had been pressed on the Cabinet by Lord Rosebery, but it was persistently put aside by the economists. Perhaps he was not sorry when the subject was ventilated (14 February, 1895) in the House of Lords. After referring to the 'lengthened consideration of the Government,' Lord Stanmore asked whether it was intended that a sum should be placed on the Estimates for that year, and, if not, what steps would be taken to improve communication between Victoria Nyanza and the sea. Lord Kimberley (who had then become Foreign Secretary) made a dilatory reply, which gave Lord Salisbury an opportunity of intervening. He expressed regret that the hostile spirit of the Treasury had not yet been conciliated. The Government were dealing lightly and cavalierly with a grave matter. There was no time to be lost. At a period when our commerce was being circumscribed on all sides by the enormous growth of Protectionist doctrines in other States, it was our business to smooth the path of British enterprise and facilitate the application of British capital. Our Government were sitting with their hands before them while four, if not five, other Powers were steadily advancing to the upper waters of the Nile. It would be a disgrace to the present generation if the commencement of the railway were longer delayed.

In reply, Lord Rosebery, who agreed with almost every word spoken by Lord Salisbury, but was prevented by Ministerial etiquette from saying anything that would reflect on any member of his Cabinet, confined himself to



safe generalities. He admitted the expediency of constructing a railway at the proper time, though at present no definite arrangement had been reached as to the territories through which the line should pass, but negotiations were in progress, and at any moment the work might be commenced. He added that the delay had not been caused at the Treasury. Ministers had thought it right to 'weigh well the expediency' of at once 'commencing such an undertaking in a country circumstanced as Uganda had been.' Not till June, a few days before the Rosebery Government fell, was the long-awaited announcement made in Supply. It was not likely that the Unionists would overlook so excellent an opportunity for baiting Sir William Harcourt, who, when in Opposition, had fiercely attacked the project which he was now supporting. He disarmed his antagonists by remarking that he had not changed his opinion! It was an excellent House of Commons joke, and the incident did but emphasise what was already notorious—the profound difference of opinion as to Imperial policy that prevailed between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But on no point was the divergence between the two men more distinct than in regard to the Uganda policy. From the outset Lord Rosebery had made it clear that if the country were abandoned he should leave the Cabinet. But the railway construction was delayed on various grounds until he had become Prime Minister, and, even then, he did not carry his view without a struggle.

He was equally long-sighted in purpose, though less fortunate in the choice of means, when he addressed himself to the self-imposed task of amending and supplementing the Anglo-German Convention arranged by Lord Salisbury in 1890. Under that complex and much criticised agree-

ment we ceded Heligoland to Germany, and in return the Berlin Government recognised our Protectorate over Zanzibar, withdrew its claims as to Witu, and accepted a delimitation of the Hinterland, which brought Uganda within our sphere of influence and gave us free access to the Great Lakes at the source of the Nile. These lakes form a considerable part of the waterway flowing along territory that was either British or within the British sphere of influence, except for one short reach where the 'wasps's waist,' as it was called, is intersected by a strip of land occupied on the one side by Germany, and on the other by the Congo Free State. In this way, unfortunately, it came about that the desired line of communication between the Cape and Cairo was broken except as regards a stipulated right of way over the non-British portion. This was admittedly the weak point in Lord Salisbury's bargain, and many of his critics complained that, in failing to complete the all-British route, he had given away Heligoland for an inadequate consideration. The Germans, it is known, were quite ready to concede what we asked, but the price they demanded was more than we could pay. In return for this narrow strip of land they insisted on being given Walfisch Bay, an isolated British port on the south-west coast of Africa and situated within the German sphere of influence. It was of no value to us, but, if it had been transferred to foreign hands, it might have been made a formidable rival to Capetown. To part with it would, therefore, have caused deep offence in the British Colony, but, as Germany would accept no other terms, we had to accept the breach in our Cape to Cairo line.

It was to remedy this fault that Lord Rosebery and Lord

Kimberley, in 1894, concluded an arrangement with King Leopold of Belgium, as Sovereign of the Congo State—under which we gave him certain leases of territory within our sphere, and he, in return, leased to us, on the western side of the lake, a strip of territory sufficient to establish telegraphic and railway communication. It was an admirable conception, but, unfortunately, King Leopold was found to be acting *ultra vires*, as the concession which he had made to us was inconsistent with a Treaty that he had concluded ten years before with Berlin. To complete the absurdity of the diplomatic blunder, the concessions which we had leased to King Leopold were upset by a Convention between France and the Congo State. It is pleaded in excuse for Lord Rosebery and Lord Kimberley that they were led into this somewhat humiliating position through the carelessness of some permanent official in Downing Street, whose duty it was to inquire beforehand whether any indefeasible objection could be urged against the Treaty that Ministers had in contemplation. It is not an excuse that will stand examination. How many times does the head of a State department take credit for work which has really been accomplished—wholly or in part—by some capable member of the permanent staff? He is awarded the praise because he is responsible for having accepted or rejected the plan of his subordinate. Obviously he cannot be permitted to share the credit unless he will also bear his part of the blame.

A matter of far more serious import, since it directly involved our command of the upper waters of the Nile, and therefore threatened our position in Egypt, was raised in the House of Commons, on 28 March, 1895. The duty of explaining the policy of the Government fell to Sir Edward

Grey, as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. But his statement was formally written out, and Lord Rosebery subsequently avowed that both personally and Ministerially he was responsible for the language held by his junior colleague. It had become known that France had secretly despatched from the west an armed expedition, under Major Marchand, which aimed at anticipating us in taking possession of territory which we regarded as within our sphere, and which, undoubtedly, was necessary to secure our position in Lower Egypt. 'Egypt is the Nile,' Lord Rosebery has said, 'and the Nile is Egypt.'

Nothing could be more definite than Sir Edward Grey's announcement. He spoke of our position in Egypt in such terms as seemed to preclude the idea of any contemplated withdrawal. After passing in review the agreements concluded five years before with Germany and Italy, he pointed out that, although not recognised by other European Powers, they were well known and had not been called into question. The dependence of Egypt on the Nile made it necessary to treat the whole of the waterway of that river as falling within the Anglo-Egyptian sphere of influence. It had been stated that a French expedition was marching towards that valley, but he could not give credence to such a rumour. The advance of such a force into a territory over which our claims had so long been known would not be merely an inconsistent and unexpected act, but 'it must be well known to the French Government that it would be an unfriendly act and would be so regarded by us.' After a brief reference to complaints of French aggression on the territory of the Niger Company and to events in Siam, Sir Edward confessed that French action had produced an uneasy feeling in the country, and caused anxiety

as to what might happen in the future. We had given no provocation to France, and had striven hard to reconcile conflicting interests with the maintenance of good relations between the two countries. The Government would omit nothing consistent with the preservation of important British claims to maintain those good relations. Ministers relied then, as they always had relied, on the justice and fairness of the French Government and French people to enable them to reconcile whatever conflicting interests there might be in little-known parts of the world with the maintenance of close and good relations between the two countries.

The announcement made by the representative of our Foreign Office that an attempt by France to interrupt our control of the Nile would be resented as 'an unfriendly act' was meant, and taken, to be an intimation that in the last resort Great Britain was ready to fight for the safety of Egypt. It cannot be said that the warning was successful, since the French Government persisted in its perverse scheme, and nearly brought the two countries into war. Still, in 1895 there was nothing further that Lord Rosebery could have done to ensure peace, and the statement placed in Sir Edward Grey's mouth was the more significant because he professed not to credit the alarmist rumour on which he had been questioned. Yet he was well aware, and the House of Commons knew he was aware, that this incredible report was absolutely correct, and that the crisis which the Government chose to describe as hypothetical was already imminent.

For the waters of the Upper Nile, as, no doubt, for Egypt itself, Lord Rosebery was prepared to fight France. But he was not prepared to risk a struggle with that Power for the sake of Siam. Very different was his bearing in



the summer of 1893 from what it had been at the beginning of that year and what it was to be in 1895. In judging Lord Rosebery's treatment of the Siamese crisis it is well to recollect that our relations at this period with France had been strained almost to the breaking point. So violent and scurrilous had been the attacks in the Paris press on the English in general and our Ambassador in particular, that in the early part of July Lord Dufferin had thought it necessary to mark his indignation by withdrawing from the capital, but a few days later he was ordered to return, so that he might be on the spot to deal with any specially threatening development of Siamese affairs.

For some years the French agents in the Far East, with or without the countenance of the Home Government, had been watching for a chance of extending their Colonial Empire over Siam. An excuse was provided by an attack made on a small military expedition that had been despatched to establish a fortified post on the Khong Rapids, which was intended to open up a railway communication with Saigon. In a subsequent disturbance a French military inspector met with his death, whereupon the Consul-General at Bangkok demanded reparation for the murder, and gunboats were ordered to Siamese waters. The prompt and abject apology of the Siamese Court was of no avail. The island of Samit was occupied in the middle of June, and in the following month the gunboats, in defiance of Treaty and, it was said, without orders from the French Government, forced their way up the Menam. This illicit procedure however, was so far recognised that what was called a pacific blockade was first threatened and eventually enforced. The practical result was summarised by Lord Rosebery on 1 August in a brief statement to the

House of Lords. Two ultimatums had been presented by France, and in each case compliance was made by Siam. Under the first Siam recognised the rights asserted by Cambodia and Annam (in the name of the Republic) to the territory on the left bank of the Mekong (with the islands); promised to evacuate all ports on that territory within a month; agreed to give satisfaction for all acts of aggression on French subjects, including pecuniary indemnities and punishment of the guilty persons; undertook to pay 2,000,000 francs on various counts as damages, and to lodge a sum of 3,000,000 dollars on account of certain claims to be subsequently determined. Under the second ultimatum France was given the right to occupy for a time the port of Chantabun, while no Siamese were to come within twenty-five kilometres of the Mekong, nor any Siamese armed vessel to navigate the Toule-Sap Lake; and Siam further undertook to negotiate a Treaty of Commerce with France.

All these points were conceded by the helpless Siamese. What meantime had Great Britain been doing? She had given no help or countenance to Siam—that was understood. Nor had she taken any special pains to protect British commerce, although far the greater part of the foreign trade of the country was in our hands. It is true that three British gunboats had been ordered to Siamese waters to provide against any disturbance arising in Bangkok that might endanger the lives of British residents. It might have been better for our dignity if this precaution had been omitted, since the presence of our vessels—which were prevented, of course, from taking any action on behalf of Siam—constituted a provocation to the French commanders. When the blockade was declared it was necessary for the

British vessels to lie outside a certain line, and from all accounts the directions were not given by the French officers in the most conciliatory spirit. On at least one occasion, though Lord Rosebery sought to minimise it, there was danger of conflict. The commander of the 'Lion,' believing, or affecting to believe, that her Majesty's ship 'Pallas' would interfere with the blockade, bore down on her with his crew at quarters and guns out, while the British officer, naturally, arranged that his vessel should not be taken at a disadvantage. Feeling in both countries was so excited that an incident of this kind might easily have led to the gravest complications. It was, however, settled by the French admiral ordering the offending officer to apologise to the British commander, who, it was admitted, showed admirable temper and self-control. There was a good deal of bickering between the London and Paris journals over other features of the blockade, and Englishmen found it rather difficult to digest some of the remarks made on our behaviour in the crisis.

There is no disguising the fact that the French Government carried the whole affair through with a very high hand. It was not their wish to smooth the trouble over. On the contrary, they were playing for popularity, and this could most easily be won by irritating the English. The truth is that Lord Rosebery had exposed us to humiliation by taking up from the outset ground which he was not prepared to contest. Sir Edward Grey, for instance, was instructed to speak in the House of Commons as though the integrity of Siam were essential to the safety of India. Yet we stood by and saw it dismembered. It was a dangerous and futile game to interfere with the French in Siam—as dangerous and futile as their poaching on the waters of the

Upper Nile. In each case it was like trying to take a bone away from a rather irritable dog. It is true that in Siam we could point to an established and fairly prosperous trade, while in Central Africa the French were strangers. But politically we had only an indirect interest in regard to Siam. It may, however, be claimed for Lord Rosebery that in his negotiations with the French Government he succeeded in maintaining the two most essential points. The first and far the more important one was to prevent the extended French frontier from reaching the boundary of British India. If the two Empires should become coterminous he apprehended infinite possibilities of future mischief. Accordingly it was stipulated in Paris by Lord Dufferin that a buffer State should be established and subsequently delimited. In the second place, Great Britain declined to be restricted to one bank of the Mekong, and formally occupied the Möng Hsing district on the east side. It possessed no value for us, but our title was indisputable, and Lord Rosebery thought that the French, who desired it, might be induced to pay a good price when the whole question should be taken into settlement. The final disposal of the Siamese question was, however, left over to Lord Salisbury, who made it the subject of one of his less fortunate Conventions. Mr. Chamberlain was, perhaps, guilty of exaggeration when he said that amongst the bequests of the Rosebery Government was a mess in Siam, nor can it be claimed on Lord Salisbury's behalf that he bettered the position. The really serious feature of the whole business, as regards Lord Rosebery, was that in the eyes of the world we had been hustled and brow-beaten by French diplomacy, and had thus lost some of the ground which we had gradually recovered in the esteem of Europe since 1885.

An opportunity of vindicating his somewhat damaged reputation for political courage was afforded to Lord Rosebery in the following years (1894 and 1895), when the war broke out between China and Japan. It was the general opinion of Continental statesmen, supported by some Englishmen who professed to understand the position in the Far East, that the solid qualities of the Chinese character and the illimitable resources of the Empire would prevail in the end against the showy valour and shallow civilisation of the Japanese. They were rapidly undeceived. The collapse of the Chinese by land and sea was equally sudden and complete. The battle of Ping Yang, on the great north road to Korea, on 16 September, which, two days later, was followed by the naval engagement at the mouth of the Yalu, opened the eyes of the Pekin authorities to the nature of the struggle on which they were engaged. Sir Robert Hart was instructed to sound the British Government as to the chance of an intervention on the part of Europe, China being already prepared to make substantial concessions for the sake of peace. Lord Rosebery undertook the office in order that he might avert the catastrophe of anarchy throughout the Chinese Empire—a catastrophe that might involve a massacre of Europeans and the destruction of foreign trade. In a speech delivered at Sheffield near the end of October, he explained and justified his action. Information had reached him, he said, from an authoritative quarter, that China would offer terms considerably exceeding those which Japan had demanded before entering on the war.

‘It seemed to us,’ he went on, ‘that it was impossible absolutely to put this information in our pockets and keep it to ourselves, because I think you will agree with me, to whatever



party at home you may belong, that no Ministry could have incurred such a responsibility. Representing as they do a nation whose interest is peace, a nation so largely engaged in the East, and, let me add, without cant, a Christian nation, they could not disregard such overtures. We did not found great hopes upon that, but we did think it our duty to sound the other courts of Europe and of the United States, to ascertain if, in their opinion, there was any possibility of Japan and China coming to terms upon any such conditions as those I have indicated. The reception of these approaches was extraordinarily favourable. The Powers of Europe seemed to feel that a common calamity overshadowed them; but in the judgment of one or two of them—only one, I think, but we will say one or two to be within the confines of truth—it did not appear that the time had yet arrived when conditions could be put forward with any advantage for the consideration of the combatants. I do not say that I disagree with that view. I am inclined rather to concur with it; but to represent that when the Powers of Europe consider a question of this kind, if one of the Powers thinks the time has not yet come and the other Powers are prepared to strain a point, and think that the time has come, that there is, therefore, a rebuff for the Power that has sounded them in the interests of peace, is, to my mind, one of the most preposterous propositions, and one of the propositions most hostile and damaging to the peaceful relations of the world, that can possibly be conceived. You may ask, Master Cutler, and ask most fairly, why, if we had these conditions in our pockets, we did not take them ourselves to Japan? "Why," you may say, "consult other Powers at all? Proceed on your own peaceful mission alone and unaided." Well, I think the answer to that is tolerably clear. In the first place, in a great catastrophe of this kind the more great Powers you have engaged in peacemaking, the better for peace. The next reason is this, that in all great International concerns a Concert of the Powers, when it can be obtained, is increasingly valuable. In my belief, the object of every Foreign Minister of the country should be to aim, whenever he can, to secure a concert of the Powers; and therefore in any case of this kind a Foreign Minister, to my mind, would have been grossly blameable if he

had not sought in some respect to obtain the concert of the Powers. Another reason is this, that between combatants it is a point of pride not to be the first to ask for peace, and it is a valuable matter, both in public and private life, to have a mediator from whom peace may be accepted honourably, instead of accepting it from the enemy ; and in an international consideration of this kind the more mediators there are, the more likely you are to secure the object in view.'

There was another reason, also mentioned by Lord Rosebery, which had induced him to appeal to the other European Powers. They were profoundly suspicious of one another, and especially of 'innocent Great Britain.' In the jealous state of affairs produced by the unsettling conflict in the Far East it would have been, as he said, impossible for us to go in alone and act as bottle-holder between China and Japan without incurring the suspicion of every Power interested—and all Powers were interested—in the East.

The statement was as complete and candid as international etiquette would permit, and was a sufficient account of the reasons why Lord Rosebery resisted the temptation to commit Great Britain to a single-handed intervention. Nor had there been, in fact, any genuine prospect of peace being arranged, and even the United States—whose motives would be less open to suspicion than Great Britain's—shrank from what appeared to be the hopeless task of bringing the conflict to an end, since two at least of the Continental Powers would have objected to such a settlement as would alone have satisfied Japan. Russia would not have tolerated its intended annexation of Korea, nor did Germany care to promote any definitive arrangement that would have put an end to her own ambitions in the Far East. The mere payment of an indemnity, however large, would not have contented the Tokio Government,

and that was practically all that would have been obtained in a Treaty concluded under European auspices.

The Japanese were soon weary of negotiations that served no practical end, and determined to carry on the war until proposals for peace should be brought by an accredited envoy from Peking. The investment of Port Arthur was proceeded with, and on 21 November the great fortress had fallen before a combined assault by land and sea. The southern ports of Wei-hai-wai were stormed on 30 January, 1895, but the town was not entered till some days later. The full surrender was made on 13 February, and before the end of the month the Japanese armies were well on the way to Mukden. It was no longer safe for the Peking Court to trifle with the situation, and on 19 March Li Hung Chang had arrived at Shimonoseki with plenipotentiary powers. A month's armistice was granted by the Mikado, and four days before the term had expired the Articles of Peace were signed.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki provided that China should pay an indemnity of two hundred million taels, and should cede Formosa, the Pescadores, and the Liao-tung peninsula, while several new ports should be thrown open to foreign commerce. Had such an arrangement been carried into effect it is probable that the recent war between Russia and Japan would have been averted, but nothing was less likely than that St. Petersburg would acquiesce in the sudden aggrandisement of a rival in the Far East for whom it cherished an ignorant but supreme contempt. It must not be supposed, however, that Russia was alone in underrating the military and naval efficiency of the Japanese. Their victories had been gained against an enemy who had not even displayed the elementary virtue of bravery in the field,

who had made no preparation for war, and whose Generals and Admirals were conspicuously unskilful, if they were not notoriously corrupt. The few scientific observers of the campaign were already full of praise for the genius and methodical organisation of the victors, but their opinion had not yet penetrated the minds of European statesmen, and the rapid success of the Mikado's fleets and armies was set down, not without reason, to the utter incompetence of the vanquished Government. Even after ten years of sedulous preparation the formidable nature of the Japanese armaments was not generally realised in the West. It was only in this country that the body of expert opinion inclined in 1904 to the belief that Japan would prove herself a match for Russia in the Far East. We were aware—i.e. our Admiralty was aware—that seamanship in the Czar's Navy was practically non-existent, and that in a war which must largely turn on maritime superiority Japan would start with an advantage not likely to be reversed even by great preponderance of strength on land. But in 1895 none of the truths which in 1904 were to receive so remarkable a demonstration were understood in Europe, and it was considered a simple matter to apply coercion to Japan. A coalition was formed by Russia, France, and Germany to deprive her of the fruits of victory, and a formal protest was made against her acquisition of the Liao-tung peninsula.

Great Britain stood aloof. Lord Rosebery was urged by Japan to intervene on her behalf. But this, he believed, would not be sanctioned by public opinion even if he had personally considered it advisable. There was no doubt that if we had taken this course we should have involved ourselves in war with the three Powers. The Dual Alliance was then in full force, and Germany had the strongest pos-

sible reasons for obliging Russia in Europe, while at the same time she would have been paving the way for her Colonial ambitions in China. Some of us, wise in the light of subsequent events, may wish that Great Britain had seized that memorable opportunity for using her Navy in a just cause, but a Prime Minister is bound, as the late Lord Salisbury often said, to remember always that he stands to the nation in the position of trustee. We had at that time no alliance, not even an understanding, with Japan. We had, indeed, some reason for believing that she might eventually find her account in making terms with St. Petersburg. In point of fact, she did subsequently intend to follow that course, and would have done so if we had not agreed, in 1902, to enter into a mutual guarantee against the interference of a third Power in any non-aggressive war that might be undertaken by either nation. In 1895 it seemed like Quixotism, almost lunacy, to defy Russia, France, and Germany in a conflict that would have consolidated them in a joint attack on our possessions in every part of the world, while a large part of our Navy must have been detached for active service in the Far East. Admirable as were the ships and the officers of the Japanese fleet, they could not have held the waters of the Pacific against such a force as France and Germany might have sent to the attack.

There was but one answer to give the Tokio Government. We would take no part in the coalition against it, but we could not go to its help. Moreover, we were bound to advise the Mikado's Ministers to submit to the bitter necessity, and bide their time for a more favourable opportunity. For Lord Rosebery to hold out false hopes to Japan would have been inexcusable levity, while to threaten an intervention which we could not carry out



would have been the sort of diplomatic braggadocio that leads to national disaster.

It might have been possible, perhaps, to throw the whole question into the caldron of an International Conference. But what would have been gained? None of the European Powers, except the three members of the hostile coalition, had sufficient interest in the Far East to risk a ship or an army corps in the quarrel, nor was there any reason for thinking that the Washington Government would have consented to take an active part in the struggle. Had Lord Rosebery desired to commit our fortunes to the test of a war which would, no doubt, be waged around our own shores, he did not, in the April and May of 1895, possess the political authority that would have enabled him to venture on so momentous an undertaking. His Administration lived in daily expectation of defeat in the House of Commons, and so fierce was the conflict of party passion that he could not with much hope of success have turned to the Unionist ranks for effective support even if any considerable number had approved so hazardous an enterprise. His Cabinet was 'on its last legs,' and the utmost hope of its Chief was that it should meet its appointed end with dignity and decorum. To embark on a 'spirited foreign policy' would instantly have brought about a Liberal secession. It is impossible to imagine Sir William Harcourt or Mr. John Morley remaining members of a Government which had thrown down the glove to the three greatest Powers on the Continent. To blame the Prime Minister in such circumstances for advising Japan to kiss the rod is an extravagance of party spirit. He is fairly entitled to credit for not having given his unpalatable counsel in such terms as would have provoked resentment in Tokio. Japanese statesmen are eminently

reasonable, and they realised on this occasion that our sentiments were absolutely friendly and that, as regards action, we had done all that was fairly to be expected.

Among the minor duties discharged by Lord Rosebery, either as Foreign Secretary or as Prime Minister, and therefore specially responsible for the work of the Foreign Office, may be mentioned the conclusion of an agreement with Russia as to the Pamir region, negotiations with the United States in regard to the Behring Sea, the coercion of the Nicaraguan Government by the temporary occupation of Corinto, and the issue of an ultimatum to the Sultan of Morocco. A question of graver anxiety, though its full importance may not have been understood till a later date, was raised by the growing restlessness of the Boers in the Transvaal. Mr. Krüger had been re-elected in 1893 to the Presidency of the South African Republic, and presently recommenced his legal or semi-legal persecution of the Uitlanders. He began in 1894 by commandeering Englishmen for the Burgher militia, though they were rigidly excluded from the ordinary rights of citizens. This dispute was settled by the vigorous intervention of Lord Loch, the High Commissioner, but no sooner was one quarrel appeased than a still more serious controversy would break out. The Dopper party in the Volksraad were incensed by the vigorous terms in which Lord Ripon, the Colonial Secretary, insisted, in October, on the Transvaal Government making a genuine attempt to deal with the Franchise question. They were even more wrath because, after the cession of Swazieland to the South African Republic, Lord Ripon quietly proceeded to anticipate the purpose for which the Boers had been anxious to acquire that territory. The British annexation of Sambaaland and Umbigesaland

—the next objects of President Krüger's ambition—cut off, as he complained in his Memoirs, the last outlet of the Transvaal to the sea. 'It goes without saying that the Republic protested against the annexation, but England did not trouble herself about that.' Mr. Krüger was especially severe in his condemnation of Lord Ripon for this smart stroke of Colonial Office diplomacy, and declared that there was nothing to choose between Liberals and Conservatives. But it was on a point of railway policy that war was on the point of being declared. In order to develop the traffic between Pretoria and Delagoa Bay he sanctioned a tariff-war against the Cape line, and, when an attempt to evade the prohibitory duties was made by unloading goods on the riverside and sending them across in ox-waggons to their destination, President Krüger closed the drifts—in defiance of the London Convention, which gave all persons, other than natives, full liberty to enter, and carry on commerce within, the South African Republic. But, treaty or no treaty, this was an injury that the Cape Colony would not endure. If the Boers had not given way, the Cape Ministry, though it relied largely upon the Dutch vote, had resolved to go to war with the Transvaal, and in taking this resolution it is understood that they had obtained the consent and approval of the Home Government. Once again, Mr. Krüger yielded to superior force, but his general conduct had been so disobliging and insolent that at any moment war might be commenced almost without notice. It is known that the Cabinet had discussed a scheme for the invasion of the Transvaal, and Lord Wolseley was summoned to attend a special meeting of Ministers and advise them on the military position. He gave them so formidable an estimate of the British force that would be required for

the invasion of the Transvaal that the project was abandoned. According to the story current at the time he asked for an army of 100,000 men !

Of all the questions with which Lord Rosebery had to deal in 1892-5, none perhaps—not even the Egyptian or the Siamese—gave him so much anxiety as the Armenian. When all allowance has been made for the exaggerations of excited philanthropists, and after admitting that the seditious plots of Armenians in the Turkish capital gave the Sultan a pretext for severe treatment of the whole race, it is impossible to find any excuse for the barbarous persecutions which were carried out by his agents in Asia Minor. The trouble arose in November, 1894, in the Sassun district, when the Armenians pleaded inability to pay taxes, on the ground that they were hopelessly impoverished by the depredations of the Kurds. Whether the statement was true or untrue, it was ignored by the Turkish authorities, and the Sultan was informed that a serious insurrection had broken out. Before the matter could be taken in hand by Zeki Pasha, to whom it had been committed by the Sultan, the Governor of Bitlis let his troops loose on the Province. Twenty-five villages were destroyed, and many thousands of persons perished. When the news of these savage doings reached London through our Consuls, urgent remonstrances were addressed to the Porte. The official account was that a body of ‘Armenian brigands’ had joined the Kurds in an attack on several Mussulman villages, and had burned alive a Mussulman notable. Regular troops had at once been despatched to establish order and protect the law-abiding inhabitants. What amount of truth was mixed up with the official fable it is impossible to say, but little hope of elucidation was derived

from the Porte's announcement that it would institute a Commission to inquire into the conduct of the 'Armenian brigands,' especially as the Commissioners were Turks, and Zeki Pasha was, by anticipation, given a decoration. The Foreign Office, then directed by Lord Kimberley, but acting under Lord Rosebery's constant supervision, proposed that the Consuls of Great Britain, Russia, and France should undertake an independent inquiry. The co-operation of the other Great Powers who were signatories of the Berlin Treaty was invited, but, as time pressed, it would be convenient that the three who were represented on the spot should act at once. The French Government agreed to co-operate with us, nor did the Russian hold altogether aloof, but expressed its unwillingness to 'raise the political question.' Indeed, it did not intend to intervene, or allow intervention to be carried out by others. The historic sympathy of Russia for the Sultan's Christian subjects is not extended to the Armenians. There is nothing which the St. Petersburg Government less desires than to incorporate within the Empire any more members of that capable but turbulent race. Everywhere intriguing, they are everywhere oppressed. They are quite as warmly detested, and have been almost as harshly treated, in Russia as in Turkey.

An independent observer who had been sent out to the disturbed region by Reuter in January, 1895, bore out all the reports of Turkish barbarity, but he also asserted his belief that the Armenians were engaged in a revolutionary movement, and that some of their leaders did not shrink from committing outrages which they afterwards attributed to the Turks. Even this view of the case, however, did not justify the methods of repression sanctioned by the Porte,



and in May a stiff Note was presented by the three Powers which contained a definite scheme of Reforms. Amongst these may be mentioned the appointment of a High Commissioner, a general amnesty for political prisoners, and the establishment of a Commission to sit at Constantinople and supervise such reforms as might be decided upon. Christian officials were to be associated with Mussulmans in the local governorships. The taxes were to be collected by the provincial authorities. The ordinary rules of judicial procedure were to be enforced, and the number of Christian judges to be made proportionate to the Christian population in each district. After a delay of several months the Porte agreed, not to accept these stringent terms, but to make certain concessions, which, of course, were duly formulated. They were not considered satisfactory by the Powers, nor had they been meant to be carried out. Meantime, however, the long-expected blow had fallen in the House of Commons, and a Unionist Administration had succeeded to power. But, as we shall presently see, the subsequent history of the Armenian question exercised a not unimportant influence on the personal fortunes of the still acknowledged leader of the Liberal party.

## CHAPTER XI

Lord Rosebery on the Home Rule Bill of 1893—Speech in the House of Lords—‘A question of policy’—The possible alternatives—Not a leap in the dark—Phrases open to criticism—The Coal Strike—Lord Rosebery as mediator—The Session of 1893—Mr. Gladstone and the Peers—Radical discontent—Mr. Gladstone’s resignation—Lord Rosebery his successor—Rumours of a Central Party—Meeting of the Liberal party—Lord Rosebery’s statement—Position of a ‘Peer Premier’—The new Administration—The Queen’s Speech—Peers’ Debate on the Address—Lord Rosebery on ‘the predominant partner’—Explanations in the Commons—Speech at Edinburgh—Attitude of the Nationalist parties—Unionist criticism—The new Administration beaten on the Address—An absurd position—The Prime Minister disparaged—Agitation against the Peers—National Liberal Federation at Leeds—Lord Rosebery’s advice—Procedure by Resolution—A Constitutional dilemma—Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt—Mansion House banquet—Murder of President Carnot—Death of the Emperor of Russia.

IN order to preserve a certain continuity in the account of the various foreign problems with which Lord Rosebery was concerned, it has been necessary to anticipate the chronological order of events. We must now go back to the record of those domestic matters in which he was prominently engaged. So far as possible, it is, no doubt, advisable for a Foreign Secretary to hold aloof from the more controversial side of home politics, and to some extent Lord Rosebery in 1893 availed himself of a privilege which, with the increasing complexity of our liabilities abroad, has become almost a duty. But it would have given an opening to misinterpretation if Lord Rosebery had on this ground refrained from giving active support to the second

Home Rule Bill when it was sent up to the House of Lords in September. On the motion for the Second Reading he referred, in his opening, to the unreality of the discussion. Not one of the Peers, he said, had entered that House without a preconceived opinion. It was not a dissecting room: it was the chamber of death itself. There was no equal division of parties in that House—only one party and a percentage of the other. After some friendly badinage of the (late) Duke of Argyll, who regarded the Home Rule Peers as ‘merely Gladstonian items, blind tools of an imperious and, if I rightly understood him, a partially insane Prime Minister,’ he protested against members of the House who had resolved to reject the whole Bill fastening on any special details. For instance, the retention of the Irish members should not prevent any one who disapproved of it from voting for the general principle of the measure. The point on which they were engaged was something larger than the particular Bill before the House. They might do something better than ‘chew the dry bones of the Bill or what had been left of them by the keen and unwearied teeth of the House of Commons.’ Moreover, they should desist from petty and personal recriminations. Not one of the Unionist Peers really believed that their Home Rule colleagues were ‘Separatists and traitors and place-hunters.’ The question how best to govern Ireland had puzzled the wisest minds of past ages. He did not profess to have himself reached absolute certainty, but he did say that the conviction which he held had been arrived at ‘after long and painful study’ and ‘in the teeth of all, or almost all, that would tend to make him take the other side.’

An amusing review was given of the treatment which the Bill had received from the Opposition in the House of

Commons—treatment which, he said, was calculated to bring Parliamentary institutions into contempt—and reference was made to the special responsibility that would be incurred in the rejection of the Bill by an unreformed House of Lords. At this point Lord Rosebery threw out a suggestion. Why not accept the Second Reading and then hold a Conference with the other House as to the terms on which Ireland should be given self-government—a conference similar to that which assembled in 1787 to settle the ‘matchless constitution of the United States’?

Lord Rosebery was ‘a witness, but not an enthusiastic witness,’ in favour of Home Rule; with him, it was not a question of fanaticism, or of sentiment, scarcely of history. It was not a counsel of perfection. It was, on the whole, ‘the best of the courses to be pursued in dealing with a highly critical and complex subject.’ It was simply a question of policy—nothing higher and nothing lower. He agreed with the Duke of Argyll that the Act of Union was to Pitt a necessary refuge and guarantee against disaffection. He was confronted with a great foreign war and with the Rebellion of 1798. But the Act of Union was only a part of Pitt’s policy. If the payment of the Roman Catholic clergy, if Roman Catholic Emancipation, if the abolition of tithes had been concurrently carried out, the House would not at the present moment be discussing a Home Rule Bill.

A brief account was given of the circumstances in which the Liberal party had taken up Home Rule, with some taunts against Conservative vacillations in regard to Coercion; Lord Rosebery then proceeded to deal with the ‘dismemberment of the Empire’ argument. There had

only been one great dismemberment of the Empire—when the American Colonists broke away. The reason of it was that we had forced on them our own ideas of law and order. Ireland was practically dismembered when she was ‘sullen, discontented, and rebellious.’ At present, Ireland was a source of weakness. It required an army there of 25,000 or 30,000 men in time of peace. How many should we want there in time of war? In a European war, Ireland would present the most vulnerable point to an enemy, and the invader would find many friends on its shores. How were the Irish party in the House of Commons to be dealt with? The Liberal Government might go, but the Nationalists would remain. They would be ‘a clog, a calculus, and an aneurism in the middle of the body politic.’ What was the Unionist policy? Twenty years of resolute government and free emigration! But the democracy would not govern by Coercion, and emigration only increased the difficulty if you sent out discontented emigrants—Irish peasants planted in the United States or Australia, torn from their homes by the impossibility of living there, going with a burning hatred of our institutions and our monarchy. This would be raising up ten devils for the one that had been laid.

The Unionist policy had been tried, and had failed. The only alternatives were Home Rule and the conversion of Ireland into a Crown Colony—which was impossible. If the Unionists would not accept Home Rule in some form, they must persist in their present policy. That would mean a revival of secret societies for assassination and outrage, Parliament impeded from English and Scotch legislation, great expense, and great waste of time. ‘Whether you plaster Ireland with your garrisons or your gold, the



end of it, by some devious path or other, will be only some form of Home Rule. It is animated by these considerations, both positive and negative, that we have adopted the course which has brought so much obloquy upon us.' The Bill before the House was proposed as an experiment, as the establishment of the London County Council in 1888 and the Reform Bill of 1867 had been experiments. Lord Derby had declared that the Reform Bill was a 'leap in the dark.' The Home Rule Bill was not a leap in the dark. It was a leap towards light, a leap and a long stride towards a more generous Irish policy, towards the reconciliation of 'two great nations too long connected and too long divided'; and, furthermore, a considerable stride towards that adjustment and devolution of local business which alone would enable the British people to support the vast and various burdens of their Empire.

It was not probable, nor was it hoped, that such a speech would induce any appreciable number of Unionist Peers to refrain from voting against the Second Reading of Mr. Gladstone's Bill. In fact Lord Rosebery had scarcely troubled to speak to the Motion before the House. All he had in mind was to assert his faith—as a 'witness, but not an enthusiastic witness'—in the principle of Home Rule, and to make a formal offer on behalf of the Prime Minister. In order to save his Bill from Parliamentary extinction, Mr. Gladstone was willing to abandon everything except the general principle, since he was well aware that it would be useless to appeal to the country against the judgment of the Peers. The object of Lord Rosebery's speech was, therefore, to dissociate the Home Rule policy from any of the details which had been so remorselessly criticised in the House of Commons, and incidentally, perhaps, to show

that the Peers were opposed, not merely to the measure before them, but to any and every concession to Nationalist aspirations. In this purpose Lord Rosebery was, no doubt, successful, but, so far as may be judged from external indications of public opinion, the demonstration of Gladstonian pliability—or openness of mind, if the term be preferred—weakened rather than strengthened what was universally admitted to be a lost cause. It should be added, perhaps, that for the specific proposals in the second Home Rule Bill no personal liability attached to Lord Rosebery beyond his share in the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. He was not a member of the ‘excellent Committee,’ so Mr. John Morley says, which prepared the scheme for the House of Commons. The colleagues whom Mr. Gladstone invited to those confidential discussions were Lord Spencer, Lord Herschell, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr. John Morley. It is true that other members of the Cabinet were kept advised of the progress made in Committee, but Lord Rosebery, during this period of incubation, had more pressing matters to occupy his time and thoughts than the proposals to be embodied in a scheme which in no circumstances would have stood any chance of being passed into law.

It was a considerable feat of political dexterity to ‘speak columns’ on the Bill without saying anything about it. More dexterous than prudent. The sinister commendations of Unionist critics did not make up for the suspicions excited among Liberals. In assuming the moderate and reasonable air which Lord Rosebery thought best calculated to appeal to an audience who have little tolerance for oratorical exuberance he was tempted to use such phrases as his being a ‘witness, but not an enthusiastic witness, in favour

of Home Rule.' They were treasured up against him by enemies in the camp who were quite determined, if possible, to prevent him from succeeding to the leadership of the party. But at present there was no immediate question of Mr. Gladstone's retirement, and Lord Rosebery's position as Foreign Minister was unassailable, while his personal popularity outside the House of Commons was at once attested and increased by a great opportunity.

The dispute between the coal-owners and the miners had lasted nearly four months, and, though neither side would give way to the other, both were exhausted, and would, it was thought, welcome friendly intervention. The Press had for some time been clamouring for the Government to offer mediation, but Ministers, with excellent judgment, decided not to come forward until the disputants had reached a mood of accommodation. On 13 November Mr. Gladstone announced, at the close of business in the House of Commons, that he had addressed a letter to the representatives of both parties, and proposed that they should hold a joint conference, over which Lord Rosebery should preside. The failure of previous discussions had suggested that better success might attend one held under the chairmanship of 'a member of the Government who, it was hoped, would not be unacceptable to either side.' Lord Rosebery, at the request of his colleagues, had undertaken that important duty. But he would not assume the position of arbitrator or umpire, or vote in the proceedings. He would simply assist the parties to arrive at a friendly settlement.

It requires no effort of the political imagination to infer that Lord Rosebery's name had been previously submitted to the representatives of both the coal-owners and miners.

Four days later the meeting was held, and in six hours—inclusive of a luncheon adjournment, which was, perhaps, as efficacious as the period of conference—a settlement had been arrived at. It is true that the points in dispute were adjourned rather than decided, but the important matter was that work should be resumed. A more permanent basis of agreement was laid by the institution—in the first instance, for twelve months—of a Board of Conciliation, with an outside chairman, which should determine any subsequent controversy as to the rate of wages. It was confessed on both sides that Lord Rosebery had displayed absolute impartiality in his direction of the proceedings, and had also shown great skill—derived, perhaps, from his experiences at Spring Gardens—in guiding a discussion which, at one moment, seemed likely to end in a fresh rupture.

There is no need here to do more than make a passing reference to the legislative proposals with which Mr. Gladstone's Government sought to compensate their party for the miscarriage of the Home Rule Bill—the measures dealing with Welsh Disestablishment, Local Veto, Registration, Employers' Liability, and Equalisation of London Rates. The prolongation of the Session over Christmas and into March, 1894, was largely due to the controversy between the two Houses on the Parish Councils Bill. Its final stage in the Commons was marked by the words of grave warning addressed by Mr. Gladstone to the Peers, whose final set of Amendments he advised his supporters to accept. 'My duty ends,' he said on 1 March, 'by calling the attention of the House to the fact that, in considering these Amendments, limited as their scope may seem to some to be, we are considering a part, an essential

and inseparable part, of a question enormously large, a question which has become profoundly acute, which will demand a settlement, and must, at an early date, receive that settlement, from the highest authority.'

These were words of warning—not words of menace. It is no secret that some of the more militant spirits in the party had long been urging Mr. Gladstone to head a campaign against the Peers, and that he had steadily refused to commit himself to such an undertaking. As Lord Rosebery once stated in the House of Lords, there was a strong vein of Conservatism in Mr. Gladstone, and he was always reluctant to attack an ancient institution unless it stood between him and the accomplishment of the policy which for the time he had at heart. Amongst all the articles from the Newcastle Programme there was not one which appealed to him as sufficiently important to justify an assault on the Peers, Home Rule excepted. And on Home Rule, as he was painfully aware, it would at that time be vain to challenge the opinion of the country.

Now the Radicals behind him were sincere enough in their desire to carry Home Rule, partly because they believed in its justice, and also because they wished to get the Irish question out of the way, so that they might set to work on the distinctive programme of their party. It was held that the most effective method would be to 'fill up the cup' of the Peers' iniquities by pressing on them a number of democratic measures, which they would be sure to reject. In this way sufficient steam would be got up for a general attack on the House of Lords. This, however, was a policy in which, whether wise or unwise, Mr. Gladstone had not the physical strength, if he had the will, to take an active part. The occasional efforts to which he



braced himself in the House of Commons were not indicative of sustained vigour, and, before he had himself expressed a wish to retire, many of the more militant Liberals were murmuring against the paralysis which they considered that he had brought upon the party. There was no insubordination or indecent demonstration of their discontent, but it was well known that they were dissatisfied with the leadership, and meant to change it. Nor had they fixed upon Lord Rosebery as Mr. Gladstone's successor.

The time has not come to write, either with impartiality or full knowledge of the facts, the inner history of the party in 1892-5, but the broad tendencies of Liberal opinion were sufficiently manifest. It had several times been announced in the Press, and as frequently contradicted, that Mr. Gladstone's resignation was imminent. These communications were not simply inventions of speculative reporters stating as fact what everybody knew to be probable. They proceeded from quarters that should have been well informed. Indeed, Mr. Gladstone's intention had been discussed in a series of Cabinet Councils, and was, therefore, no longer a secret as against those who were most interested in learning the truth. The Radicals lost no time in laying their views before the Chief Whip, who promised to represent them in the proper quarter. They protested, formally and emphatically, against the leadership of the party being given to a member of the House of Lords. There was, it must be confessed, some reason in their attitude, since it was their desire to get up an organised movement against that Chamber. Nor did it lessen their opposition to Lord Rosebery as their future leader that he was deeply committed to the principle of

introducing into the House of Lords a certain representative element. This, they feared, would strengthen the House and perpetuate its authority. In the political jargon of the time, they were for 'ending,' not for 'mending.' Any Peer would, therefore, have been less objectionable in their eyes than a reforming one. But their antipathy to Lord Rosebery was even more personal than it was political. They detested his Egyptian policy, they derided his schemes for Uganda, and they mistrusted him on Home Rule. As a matter of principle, they would probably have raised their voice against any other Peer, but the agitation would not have been conducted with equal pertinacity if Mr. Gladstone's nomination had been expected to fall (let us say) on Lord Spencer or Lord Kimberley.

Mr. Gladstone, however, had made his decision, and was never easily turned from a deliberate purpose. In public and in private he had several times indicated his views, and during the last few years they had been strengthened by his close intimacy with Lord Rosebery. It is even possible that his mind, which to the last was progressive and receptive, had realised that the Liberalism of the 'Seventies and 'Eighties must be rejuvenated, and, if it were to hold the English people, must divest itself of the Anti-Imperialism which, justly or unjustly, had been associated with its name. He had cheerfully concurred in what was very like a reversal of his own foreign policy by the colleague whom he had appointed, and re-appointed, to the charge of our external relations. He was also, in his old age, keenly susceptible of the importance of youth, and was convinced that amongst his colleagues Lord Rosebery would be the most efficient as his successor in the party leadership.

Mr. Gladstone, of course, had no right to dictate in such

a matter to his followers, but he was incontestably entitled to recommend whom he pleased to the choice of the Sovereign. This is not the place to discuss the rival claims of Lord Rosebery and Sir William Harcourt. The warmest admirers of the chosen candidate must sympathise with the bitter disappointment inflicted on one of the most brilliant and most industrious of modern Parliamentary statesmen. He possessed many qualities which have been withheld from Lord Rosebery, and was free from certain defects which have impaired Lord Rosebery's usefulness as a party leader. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the choice made by the Queen on the advice of Mr. Gladstone was, at the time, heartily endorsed by the great body of Liberals in the House of Commons, and cordially, even enthusiastically, approved by the party as a whole. The Radicals who objected were a comparatively small group at Westminster, and represented a somewhat antiquated school of middle-class thought—cultivated, earnest, and consistent though it was. Whether its influence may revive in the future remains to be seen. But in 1894 it had clearly lost its grip on the popular mind, though it retained, thanks to the intellectual power of its Parliamentary exponents, no slight influence in directing the counsels of the party. It is idle to speculate on what might have been the fortunes of Liberalism if they had been entrusted to other guidance than Lord Rosebery's, or to trace in imagination the lines he might have followed if, from the outset of his career as Prime Minister, he had not had to contend against a strong current of disaffection in the House of Commons.

On 5th March, 1894, Lord Rosebery entered on his new task, having taken the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Lord President of the Council, and making way at the

Foreign Office for Lord Kimberley. His health was by no means re-established at this critical period of his career, and it would have been impossible for him, in addition to the work of Prime Minister, to go through the daily routine of his previous post, though, as we know, he remained in close and constant collaboration with the chief of the Department in which he had so quickly built up a high reputation. He introduced no important change in the Cabinet beyond such transfers as had been rendered necessary by his own promotion.

At more than one moment in his career Lord Rosebery has been made the object of conjectural statements pointing to him as the chief of a Coalition Cabinet. The gossip was started on his accession to Mr. Gladstone's place. He would throw over Home Rule, it was confidently stated, and bring the Liberal Unionists back to the party which they had so reluctantly abandoned. Some of them, perhaps, would have accepted such an invitation if it had been extended to them. But, between the terms that Lord Rosebery could honourably offer and those which they might reasonably be expected to accept, there was too wide a gulf to be bridged over by a practicable compromise. The declarations promptly made by the Duke of Devonshire destroyed any hopes that may have been reared on a somewhat fantastic foundation. Mr. Gladstone's successor could not renounce the principle of Home Rule; and the Liberal Unionist leader would not even consider it. Thus, for the first time, passed away the vision of a Ministry of Affairs, based on a Central party of moderate-minded politicians, and led by Lord Rosebery and the Duke of Devonshire.

It need hardly be explained that such rumours, though

spread with the best of good intentions, tend to prejudice a leader who aims at keeping together a concentrated party. This, of course, was the main object which it was incumbent on Mr. Gladstone's successor to pursue. Yet it cannot be denied that some of the expressions which Lord Rosebery was soon to employ lent a certain countenance to the imputations of his enemies and the conjectures of maladroit friends. At the meeting of the Liberal party, a week after his accession, he began by paying a tribute to Mr. Gladstone, and explained that it had been thought proper that the new leader should make some declaration of policy. 'In my opinion,' he went on, 'no such declaration is necessary. We stand where we did. There is no change in measures—there is only a most disastrous change in men.' The Cabinet remained pledged to the proposals laid down in the Queen's Speech of 1893, and did not intend to recede from any one of them. The Welsh Disestablishment Bill would be pressed to the forefront, and pressed, if possible, to a definite and successful conclusion. But the group of questions known as the Irish questions required more than a word. 'To that question we are pledged by every tie of honour and policy.' He admitted that his speech in the House of Lords on the Home Rule Bill had raised some doubts as to his position—but only, he thought, amongst those who had read it in a cursory manner.

It is said that all roads lead to Rome, and there are many roads by which to arrive at a conviction on Home Rule; but I venture to say that our line is as direct as any that conducts to the goal, and that it will not be any the less steadfastly pursued. If, gentlemen, you had any doubts in your minds as to the course that I am likely to pursue, I think there is one pledge that the Government gives, the character of which is as significant as the headship of Mr. Gladstone lately imparted—I



mean the presence of Mr. John Morley. It is an open secret that higher office, from the hierarchical point of view, was pressed upon Mr. John Morley's acceptance, but that he thought it his duty not to sever his career from the cause of Ireland.

Next Lord Rosebery spoke of the need for reforming the House of Lords—a Chamber so constituted, with the democratic suffrage then established, was an anomaly and a danger. The House of Lords, from being a body of hereditary legislators more or less equally divided in party, had become 'one great Tory organization, guided at the beck and call of a single individual.' This account of the Upper House, it should be pointed out, was somewhat exaggerated. A considerable number of Peers have always held themselves aloof from any sort of party control, and, even in Lord Salisbury's time, occasionally went out of their way to assert their independence. It is by no means correct to say that 'when a Tory Government is in power the power of veto is not exercised by the House of Lords, but when a Liberal Government is in power, it is exercised at the dictation of the Carlton Club.'

But Lord Rosebery would not go so far as some of his friends and represent Peers as pariahs.

I am not disposed to think that, because a man is born to a particular position he should therefore be debarred from the higher opportunities of serving his country. I sympathise entirely, so far as I know them, with the views of a certain deputation which waited on our late Whip (Lord Tweedmouth). I hold that it is a great inconvenience to the Liberal party when a Liberal Prime Minister is not in the House of Commons. It is a grave inconvenience—especially to the Prime Minister. But I am not one of those who think that he is under a stigma and a ban. I have not so learned the Liberalism in which we were brought up, and which has broadened the confines of our

body politic. It is comprehensive enough to satisfy the most exacting. Our Liberalism has been an enfranchisement, and not an exclusion. In this century we have freed the Jews, we have freed the Roman Catholics, and it is not in this stage of our political development that I am prepared to make a new genus of exclusion, to create a fresh disability, and to set up the principle that the accident of birth shall debar a man from reasonable service, and that in future there is to be written over the doors in Downing Street, 'No Peer need apply here.' It was against my will that I left the Foreign Office—the Office in which we are assembled and which I loved with intense devotion—to come to a post where I might not be unanimously acceptable, but where I felt that the call of honour was so clear as not to be mistaken. I sympathise with those who view it otherwise; I hope they will forgive me if I cannot share their opinion. I would only ask you to judge me, not by my words, but by my acts. When you are tired of me I shall only be too ready to relinquish a service which, though honourable, is arduous; but while I am where I am you may be sure of this, that no Liberal in your ranks will endeavour more steadfastly to do his duty to the Liberal party.

The language was dignified and graceful, but the fact of such an appeal being necessary was not of good omen. Though none of the Radicals present offered any public protest, it was known that they were only waiting for a favourable opportunity. Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, however, expressed their concurrence with the Prime Minister's declaration. Thus a meeting which had been awaited with some anxiety passed off smoothly and successfully; but before the Prime Minister could derive any advantage from the good impression he had produced he deliberately, so it seemed, set himself to efface it.

The Queen's Speech contained no item of interest, and offered little opening for specially controversial debate. The Government programme included Bills for the relief

of the Evicted Tenants, the abolition of Plural Voting, for Disestablishment in Wales and Scotland, and for promoting Conciliation in Labour disputes. The references to foreign events were necessarily somewhat jejune, since only a few days had elapsed between the Prorogation and the opening of the new Session. Nevertheless, the debate on the Address was marked in both Houses by singular and inauspicious incidents. In reply to a rasping speech from Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, having paid another glowing tribute to the memory of Mr. Gladstone,<sup>1</sup> passed briefly in review the recent occurrences and more immediate prospects in Egypt, Siam, and Uganda. Turning to domestic policy, he adverted to the legislative measures to be brought before Parliament, and explained why they did not include another Home Rule Bill. Ministers had no wish to shirk the Irish Question, but it did not appear to be the proper

<sup>1</sup> 'Every one can appreciate the greatness of Mr. Gladstone's character and attainments, but there is one aspect of his career which makes his retirement pathetic and interesting—I mean the long reach over which his recollection passes. He heard the guns saluting the battle of Waterloo, he heard some of Mr. Canning's greatest speeches, he heard the Reform debate in this House in 1831 and Lord Brougham's memorable speech. He was, over half a century ago, the right-hand man of Sir Robert Peel's famous Government; and when to this coating of history which he acquired so long ago is added his own transcendent personality, one cannot, it seems to me, help being reminded of some noble river that has gathered its colours from the various soils through which it has passed, but has preserved its identity unimpaired, and gathered itself in one splendid volume before it rushes into the sea.' These sentences mark, perhaps, the highest point reached by Lord Rosebery's Parliamentary oratory. If in mere point of language they fall short of classic simplicity, they express a fine thought in generous words that lost nothing from the manner of delivery. But Lord Rosebery is not often at his best in the frigid atmosphere of the House of Lords. His more earnest moods are better adapted to the platform, his lighter essays to an after-dinner celebration.

function of the House of Commons to prepare and pass Bills merely to furnish sport for the House of Lords. To bring forward another Home Rule Bill would mean the postponement of all legislation for England, Wales, and Scotland. It was possible, of course, to appeal to the country. Nor would Ministers be afraid to do so when the time should be ripe, but they would never concede the right of an hereditary House to force a Dissolution. Mr. Disraeli's prediction in 1844 that fifty years would suffice to make Ireland contented and happy had been falsified by events. If at that time the country was in a quieter and better state, it was not owing to the light railways or other remedial measures adumbrated by Lord Salisbury. It was due to the hope, held out by the Liberal party, that the great boon of local self-government for purely local affairs, so far as this was consistent with the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, would not long be delayed.

Up to this point the Prime Minister had ruffled no susceptibilities. Nor was there any reason why his statement should be carried further, since there was no intention of introducing another Home Rule Bill in that Session or the next. Why should a Prime Minister who had only been a few days in Office trouble to look further ahead? But, by some reckless impulse of proleptic candour, Lord Rosebery was induced to comment on a remark made by Lord Salisbury with which he was 'in entire accord.' Before Home Rule could be conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England, as 'the predominant partner,' said Lord Salisbury, would have to be convinced of its justice.

'That may seem a considerable admission to make,' Lord Rosebery continued, 'because your lordships well know that the majority of English members of Parliament, elected from

England proper, are hostile to Home Rule. But I believe that the conviction of England in regard to Home Rule depends on one point alone, and that point is the conduct of Ireland herself. I believe that if we can go on showing this comparative absence of agrarian crime, if we can point to the continued harmony of Ireland with the great Liberal party of this country, if we can go on giving proofs and pledges that Ireland is entitled to be granted that boon which she has never ceased to demand since the Act of Union was passed—I believe that the conversion of England will not be of a slow or difficult character.’

It may be argued, from the text of these remarks, that Lord Rosebery was saying no more than he had already stated in public. But the phrases used, ‘predominant partner’ and ‘considerable admission,’ were seized upon by critics, and taken as evidence that the speaker was prepared to throw Home Rule over. Nor could he complain because such a view was taken. Just as a man is legally held responsible for the natural and reasonable consequences of his action, so politically he is liable to be fixed down to any natural and reasonable interpretation of his language. It is probable that Mr. Gladstone could have expressed precisely the same idea in words that would have given no opening to adverse criticism, but Lord Rosebery does not possess the gift of dexterous ambiguity, and found himself saddled with repudiating, when he had only meant to argue for postponing, Home Rule. The explanations given by his lieutenants in the House of Commons—neither of them, perhaps, quite sorry to see that the Leader imposed on them had already been involved in difficulty—did not satisfy the Nationalists or the recalcitrant group of Radicals. Sir William Harcourt admitted that Home Rule was to be hung up, but pointed out that this was better than Coercion



in action, and Mr. Morley could only promise that the Home Rule policy would be 'prosecuted with all the despatch that circumstances would allow.' The emphatic language in which he put aside the idea that Lord Rosebery would flinch from an honourable obligation was regarded, not as a compliment to the Prime Minister, but as a device for tying him down to an unwelcome task. Mr. Morley's denial of the rumours as to dissensions within the Cabinet was received with laughter, and, quite apart from the merciless gibes of the Opposition, it was admitted that the defence of the Prime Minister as offered in the House of Commons had injured rather than helped his case.

It was necessary that he should speak for himself. Fortunately, he had previously arranged to address a great meeting at Edinburgh on the seventeenth. He complained that the criticisms of his speech in Parliament had not been animated by the benevolence that makes criticism tolerable. 'What I said was, that if we wanted to carry Home Rule we must carry conviction to the hearts of the people of England, and by those words I stand. They are a truism, they are a platitude in the sense in which I uttered them ; but in the sense in which they have been interpreted they bear a meaning which, as a Scotchman, I should be the first to repudiate.' He did not suggest that they would have to wait for an English majority—at that rate they might get no reform at all. Still, he did believe they would get an English majority for Home Rule at the next General Election. In 1886 England returned 339 Unionists, to 126 Home Rulers ; and in 1892 the figures were 266 against 199, so that in six years the Unionist majority in England had fallen from 213 to 67. Nevertheless, they could do without an English majority if they were to get,

say, a clear majority of 100 with the help of an increased Scotch and Irish vote.

This statement was scoffed at by the Unionists as a humiliating recantation forced upon the Prime Minister by the Home Rule party. Certainly it was a repudiation of one of the meanings that might legitimately be placed on his words at Westminster, but it was quite in harmony with the equally justifiable interpretation claimed by the speaker himself. It was accepted as satisfactory by Mr. John Dillon, as representing the great body of the Nationalist party—the anti-Parnellites, as they were then called—but not by Mr. Redmond's small group of Parnellite intransigents. The average opinion among English Liberals was decidedly unfavourable—they considered that the Prime Minister had been 'squeezed.' Those who in their hearts disliked the idea of Home Rule blamed him for giving way, while those who staunchly adhered to that principle felt no gratitude for an involuntary concession. It was all quite illogical, perhaps, but the political intelligence of Englishmen is not subtle, and scarcely ever allows a public man to modify the first impression produced by his words. Nor had Lord Rosebery strengthened confidence in his Home Rule orthodoxy by linking the Scottish with the Irish demand. 'I, for one, believe—I speak now not as a Minister, but as a man—that when we receive from Scotland that national demand which appears to be ripening so fast, a national demand for that local power of self-government which would cause the business of Scotland, so long neglected in England, to be settled in Scotland, I, as a Minister, shall not be standing to oppose you in the breach, and, if I am not a Minister, as a man I shall hope to be in the storming party.' Now as there was not at the time, or

likely in the near future to be, any effective demand in Scotland for such Home Rule as the Nationalists claimed in Ireland, the association of a full-fledged with an unhatched scheme was held to imply disregard for both.

The general estimate of Lord Rosebery's position was, perhaps, not unfaithfully expressed by Mr. Chamberlain :—

We have now a Prime Minister who is willing to support Home Rule, though he has no firm faith in its early success. He is willing to disestablish one Church, or to establish three, as may be most convenient. He is willing to abolish the House of Lords, even at the cost of revolution, though he is himself in favour of a Second Chamber. There is no change, then, in policy. But there is a change. There is a change in the attitude of the Prime Minister. In Mr. Gladstone, at any rate, we had a man who succeeded in convincing himself the more he tried to convince others. But Lord Rosebery is not convinced, and he does not seem to think that any one needs conviction. Mr. Gladstone was one of whom it was sometimes said that his earnestness ran away with his judgment, but Lord Rosebery allows his judgment to be run away with by the earnestness of other people. I do not think that this situation is likely to last very long. It is too strained to continue.

The criticism was harsh, but it did fairly represent the current opinion, and the concluding sentences were undoubtedly correct. Nobody has any respect for a weak Government, and Lord Rosebery's reputation as a leader was impaired by the obvious fact that his task was hopeless. All that he could do was to postpone defeat—a defeat which every day seemed imminent, and which, when it should come, would be welcome to a large section of his nominal supporters.

The spirit in which he was received by an active group of the Radicals was illustrated by an incident in the Debate on the Address. An amendment was moved by Mr.

Labouchere, praying that the power of the Lords to reject Bills passed by the Commons should cease, and expressing a hope that her Majesty, with the advice of her Ministers, would secure the passing of that reform. By an unwritten law of Parliament, it is considered impermissible for a Government to accept any Amendment to the Address, and, if Mr. Labouchere's were to be treated seriously, it must be regarded as a question of Confidence. The humour or malice of the plot was kept up till an opportunity presented itself, at dinner-time, of taking a "snap division," and the Government were placed in a minority of 2—147 against 145—having been saved from a more severe defeat only by Conservative votes. There was, of course, no question of Ministers resigning, though the Opposition pretended to expect it. But Sir William Harcourt had to announce that the Government would vote against the Address which they had themselves drafted, and that, after this had been negatived, he would move a new one.

Lord Rosebery suffered especially from the praise—lukewarm though it sometimes was—bestowed upon his foreign policy by the leading Unionist speakers. Reference has already been made to his attempt in the autumn of 1894 to bring about a joint intervention of the Powers in the Chino-Japanese war, when his action was equally misinterpreted on both sides; by Radicals as breathing a Jingo spirit, and by Conservatives as having brought a rebuff on this country. Moreover, he had failed to effect the completion which he desired of the British communications in Central Africa between Cairo and the Cape, while he had given offence both to France and Germany. Nor was it possible for him to escape discredit for what he was unable to avert—the miscarriage of Government legislation in the House of

Commons. The only material success achieved by the party in the popular Chamber was the 'democratic Budget,' introduced by Sir William Harcourt, which, while placing an extra penny on the income-tax, introduced a certain number of new exemptions in favour of persons of small means. The long-threatened reform of the 'Death Duties' was now executed, and, though it gave deep offence to a few wealthy members of the party, it was generally popular because it averted the necessity for laying fresh taxes on the ordinary voter. The equalisation of rates in London was also embodied in a Statute, and a first step towards the Unification of the Metropolis was taken by the publication of the Royal Commissioners' Report. Otherwise the Session was practically sterile, and the more energetic Radicals made up their minds that no important reforms would be carried until the House of Lords had been 'dealt with.' At the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Leeds, on 20 June, a resolution was adopted which called on the Government to introduce during the existing Parliament a measure for the abolition of the Veto of the House of Lords upon measures passed by the House of Commons.

Conservative speakers, naturally, made a mock of the agitation, and inquired how the House of Lords would be induced to accept a Bill for its own extinction, and the speech which Lord Rosebery had promised to deliver at Bradford was anticipated with much interest. His views on the existing constitution of the Upper House were well known, and on various occasions he had thrown out hints of the direction that might be taken by reform. But he had never proposed a limitation of its powers which would reduce it to a nullity. His reception on 27 October was very cordial ;



for the loss of reputation, which undoubtedly he had suffered at Westminster, had not affected the enthusiastic Liberals in the north of England. He frankly accepted the 'fill-the-cup' policy of his party. When the Dissolution should come, he declared—and perhaps it would not be long deferred—the battle of the polls would be fought, not on Disestablishment or Home Rule or Local Option, but on a question which included and represented all—the question of the House of Lords. The time for dealing with it had arrived. Thrice within sixty years the House of Commons had been popularised by successive extensions of the franchise. The House of Lords, however, was unchanged. It contained 5 per cent of Liberals and 95 per cent of 'another party which he would not define.' It mattered not how many Liberals the country returned to the House of Commons—it might return 600—yet there would still be only 30 Liberal peers. That was a mere mockery of free institutions. In principle he was a Second Chamber man, but if he had to choose between no Second Chamber and such a Second Chamber as the House of Lords, he should feel there was ground for hesitation as to his principle. The House of Lords in its present position was an absolute danger, an invitation to revolution. It was not a Second Chamber at all, it was a party organisation controlled for party purposes.

It was said that the Peers never resisted the known will of the people. How could the will of the people be better expressed than through the representatives of the people? Who gave the Peers the right to decide what were or were not the wishes of the people when expressed through its representatives? To concede such a right would be to imply that Liberal legislation would only be carried under

threat of revolution, as in 1882, when Birmingham and Glasgow were arming, and Bristol was in flames.

The country had before it a great national question and a great national danger. The issue was tremendous—the greatest since their fathers resisted the tyrannies of Charles I and James II. But the difficulties of dealing with it were enormous. Constitutionally, the powers of the House of Lords could only be abolished or modified by a Bill passed through both Houses. Any other way was a revolution. He did not think, however, that matters would come to a revolution—there were means of making the will of the country felt without violent or unconstitutional methods. In the first place, the House of Commons should proceed, as it always had proceeded in its contests with the House of Lords, by Resolution. In 1678 it had asserted by Resolution its free and uncontrollable right to represent the people in matters of finance. The Resolution which he had in mind would state, in clear and unmistakable terms, that the House of Commons, in the partnership with the House of Lords, was the predominant partner. Such a Resolution would be proposed by Ministers—a very different thing from one proposed by a private member. It would represent the joint demand of the Executive and the popular Chamber for a revision of the Constitution. Afterwards the House of Commons would call on a power greater than itself—on the people of Great Britain—to give them a mandate for dealing with the question. On the verdict of the people the issue would depend. ‘We fling down the gauntlet: it is for you to back us up.’

How many readers to-day of this summary of Lord Rosebery’s challenge to the Peers could say off-hand, in reliance on their unassisted memories, whether such a Resolu-

tion was ever proposed? The whole business was fatuousness and bathos, and it is somewhat astonishing, when we review the situation at a distance of time which removes all party prepossessions, that so shrewd a man as Lord Rosebery, assisted by colleagues of such great intellectual power as Sir William Harcourt and Mr. John Morley, could have settled on so tame a conclusion. Instead of a declaration of war, the party had given a public confession of impotence. What authority would reside in a Resolution carried by a strict party Whip? If there had been any hope of detaching a considerable body of the Unionists, or even compelling them to stand aside, the proposal might have been worth bringing forward. Then it would have been possible to represent the dispute as one between the two Houses. The issue that Lord Rosebery sought to raise was a mere trial of party strength in the popular Chamber.

There were but two constitutional methods which were likely to be effective for abolishing or abridging the powers of the Lords. But it was at least doubtful whether the Crown would assent to the simpler means—the creation of a sufficient number of Peers to vote the extinction of their House—while the other expedient was forbidden by the tactical position of the Liberal party. The Prime Minister might recommend the Crown to dissolve Parliament on the Peers' rejection of any or all of the measures passed by the Commons. But to this course there were two valid objections. The first was that such action would seem to recognise a right in the Peers to force a Dissolution of the other House. The other was that the Liberals were by no means confident of getting a majority, and to challenge a trial of strength without the certainty of a striking success

would but strengthen that adverse authority which they wished to overthrow.

The difficulties of the position were frankly recognised by Lord Rosebery in a speech he delivered later in the year at Glasgow. It was a reply to recent criticisms by Mr. Balfour and other leading Conservatives. Having reaffirmed his faith in the principle of a Second Chamber, he suggested the sort of powers which he would repose in it—indirect rather than direct, more consultative than legislative—so that it would be a sort of High Court of Justice for the Empire, and represent those Imperial interests which as yet were unrepresented in Parliament. Meantime, however, the country had to deal with the readjustment of the powers of the two existing Chambers, so that the will of the popular Chamber should be made ‘plainly and manifestly predominant.’ This, he thought, could be brought about either by obtaining the consent of the Peers to abridge their Veto or by the old Parliamentary system of a conference between delegates of both Houses. In the first instance, however, the Government would proceed by Resolution. But the efficacy of this method would depend on the support received from the nation. If Ministers were sent back with such a majority as in 1892 they could not effect much against the House of Lords. On the other hand, if the Liberal party obtained such a majority as it had received on some previous occasions, it would not be the fault of Ministers if the House of Lords were not made to feel the force of the nation’s will.

It came back to the old dilemma. The Cabinet’s hands were tied unless it could dissolve Parliament, while, if it did go to the country, it would, in all probability, be swept out of existence. The position was essentially false, and it

was impossible for any Prime Minister to mend it, even if he were a member of the House of Commons, or had enjoyed an early training in its moods and methods. It is at least conceivable that Lord Rosebery's political reputation would have stood higher than it stood at the end of 1894 if the honours and responsibilities of Prime Minister had been withheld from him and conferred on Sir William Harcourt. That practised Parliamentarian would have exercised a fuller authority as leader of the House if he had also been leader of the party, whereas if in the difficult circumstances of the period he had failed, the position of Lord Rosebery would have been materially strengthened. If, on the other hand, Sir William had been successful, his colleague would have been able to devote the whole of his thought and energy to the active administration of foreign affairs. Apart from minor slips (as e.g. in the curious incident about the New Zealand Ministry wishing to take over the management of Samoa), his supervision of Lord Kimberley's Department was so effective as to deprive Unionists of one of their stock subjects of invective against the Liberal party. Especially when he approached the ornamental side of international politics he acquitted himself with singular grace and distinction. At the Mansion House banquet, on 9 November, it fell to his lot to tender the sympathy of the nation to the two States with which our diplomatic relations were least cordial. With Russia we had indeed concluded a treaty of delimitation as to Central Asia, but the policy of France had been persistently irritating and almost 'unfriendly.' International jealousies, however, were laid in the presence of domestic affliction. The assassination of President Carnot gave the English Prime Minister a fitting opportunity of referring, in kindly



terms, to the country with which, in our last European war, we stood shoulder to shoulder, and with which we always desired to stand shoulder to shoulder, not in war, for we did not desire war, but in the generous rivalry of commerce and peace. The death of the Czar Alexander III—the master of many legions, who never waged a war—was made the subject of a touching passage:—

Death is always a terrible thing, though sometimes, and not infrequently, more terrible to the survivors than to those who are taken. But it must always seem that death comes more appallingly to the occupant of a throne. The light that beats upon him is so fierce—he has seemed, up to the moment of his removal, so sublime and so uncontrolled—that it would not be in human nature not to think that the coming of the angel of death did not seem more sudden and tragic in such a case than in ours.

The general tribute of Europe to the memory of Alexander III was a tribute to Peace:—

There is a character in English history—Lord Falkland, who was killed at the battle of Newbury. He was comparatively a young man; there was nothing to distinguish him from many who died in that campaign. Though he was brave, he was constantly heard murmuring among his companions, ‘Peace, Peace.’ He could think of nothing but an end to that war. Well, my Lord Mayor, there are millions of Lord Falklands in Europe now. The one passion, the one secret passion of every disinterested bosom in this world, is for Peace, industrial and international Peace.

## CHAPTER XII

Liberal meeting at Cardiff—Reception of the Prime Minister—Welsh Disestablishment—Parnellites and Radicals—Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge—The Cordite Vote—Defeat of the Government—Lord Rosebery's resignation—His views on the position of a Prime Minister—Platform speeches—Defeat of his Administration—Need for Liberal concentration—House of Lords the first question—Lord Salisbury's third Administration—Lord Rosebery on Liberal failures—Party organisation—The persecution of Armenians—The question of British intervention—Lord Rosebery's retirement—Speech in explanation—Disagreement with Mr. Gladstone—This the 'last straw'—Lord Rosebery's other reasons—References to his late colleagues—Compromise in politics.

DISUNITED as the Liberal party was in Parliament, each group intriguing to obtain precedence for its own particular cause, all differences were sunk at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation held at Cardiff just before the opening of Parliament in 1895. Confidence was voted in Lord Rosebery's leadership, Home Rule was declared to hold the foremost place in the programme, satisfaction was expressed at the Prime Minister's declaration with regard to the Peers, the announcement of Welsh Disestablishment as the first Government measure for the coming Session was heartily welcomed, Local Option and the Unification of London were mentioned with respect, and a similar compliment was paid to the other items in the Newcastle list of agenda. A spirited address was delivered by the Prime Minister chiefly in support of Welsh Disestablishment. On the general question of an Established Church, he declared

the matter to be one for national option—whether in Wales, Scotland, or England. As to the House of Lords, the reason why the Resolution which Ministers had in view was not to be at once pressed on the House of Commons was that doing so would entail an instant Dissolution. Before taking that course they wanted to do something more for the people—control of the liquor traffic, payment of members, and One Man One Vote, without which their democratic suffrage was little more than a sham. Next day he declared that he saw no probability of an immediate Dissolution. The majority in the Commons was small, but it was a working majority, and for their own sakes he thought that ‘even discontented friends’ would be too wise to turn out the Liberal Government. It had a long spell of good work before it if—Lord Rosebery significantly added—its friends in the country and its friends in the House of Commons gave it their support.

Amongst its friends, however, could no longer be counted Mr. Redmond and his group of extreme Nationalists. Privately they had invited the Opposition whip to call upon them when he pleased to vote against Ministers. This was a length to which the malcontent Radicals would not quite venture to proceed, though they could not be relied upon for positive support in a critical division. They were further incensed by the outlay which it was understood that the Government intended to propose for the purpose of bringing the Navy up to a higher standard of efficiency. The Queen’s Speech announced no important legislation beyond what had already been promised out-of-doors, and the most striking passages referred to the Armenian disorders and the pacific understanding which, ‘after protracted negotiations,’ had been reached with the French Republic as to

the delimitation of boundaries in West Africa. This was undertaken to prevent such unfortunate conflicts as had taken place in the previous year between the British and French, and which, for a few days, seemed likely to cause a serious quarrel over territory of disputed ownership and far from ascertained value.

On foreign affairs Lord Salisbury's attitude was fairly in accord with the Government's policy, but his caustic review of their domestic achievements drew a sharp reply from the Prime Minister. It appeared that Lord Rosebery particularly resented the suggestion that their legislative promises were only acts in a drama, not seriously intended. Ministers, he declared, were bent on the honest fulfilment of their pledges, and as long as they possessed a majority would use it in redeeming them.

The business of the Session was almost confined to the House of Commons, nor would Lord Rosebery have been able to take an active part in Parliament even if the proceedings in the other Chamber had been more important. Early in the spring he had been seized with a sharp attack of influenza, and paid for resuming his work too soon by a severe relapse. Confident reports of his impending resignation were on several occasions circulated, and the cause was asserted to be, not so much the unconcealed feuds in the Cabinet, as the physical collapse of the Prime Minister. On 8 May he delivered an address to the National Liberal Club, and paid elaborate compliments to his chief colleagues, and especially to Sir William Harcourt, the 'indefatigable and brilliant leader of the House of Commons.' But the effort taxed his strength, and at one time it seemed as if he would not be able to finish his speech—which was, in the main, an exhortation

to the party to strengthen Ministers in dealing with the House of Lords, which was, he said, a hindrance and permanent obstacle to legislation.

In spite of the opposition offered by those Radicals who wished to retrench expenditure on the national defences, Lord Rosebery, with his colleagues at the Admiralty and War Office, was genuinely anxious to place the Navy and Army on a sound and permanent footing. During the Siamese crisis—when the gravest possibilities had to be considered—he had been rendered, on the best official information, painfully aware of the insufficiency of our preparations for Imperial defence, and Lord Spencer had asked for between four and five millions sterling extra in the Naval Estimates. On the Army there was no increased Vote, but it was believed that the first essential to effective reorganisation was to induce the late Duke of Cambridge to resign the office of Commander-in-Chief. This being accomplished, Ministers would carry out the main principles of the Report of the Hartington Commission. The announcement on 21 June by Mr. Campbell-Bannerman that his Royal Highness would not stand in the way of the contemplated reforms in Army administration,<sup>1</sup> though accompanied by many compliments to the retiring Commander-in-Chief, was paraded as a Departmental success, but in a few hours the Government had been defeated on a War Office vote. The division had been suddenly taken, and if Ministers had cared to ask the House to rescind its action they would have been amply entitled to take that

<sup>1</sup> The resignation of the Duke of Cambridge was brought about by the late Queen, who, acting, no doubt, on the advice of her Ministers, addressed an affectionate but imperative letter to the Commander-in-Chief.



course. But they were weary of existing on Parliamentary sufferance. They would never be safe from surprises, and it was extremely doubtful, if the Cordite vote should be reversed, whether a similar disaster would not overtake them the next week or the week after.

Moreover, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, it was understood, chose to regard the action of the House as a personal affront, and at all costs was determined to resign. It was idle to think of reconstructing the Ministry at such a moment. What recruit worth having could fairly be invited to join a Cabinet falling not so much through external pressure as from internal divisions? Its hopeless condition had been so keenly realised about ten weeks before that, when Mr. Campbell-Bannerman wished to be nominated for the vacant Speakership, he had been induced by his colleagues to withdraw his candidature simply because they were not willing to face the risks involved in any rearrangement of the Departments of State. What had been inadvisable on 10 April would have been suicidal on 21 June, and on 22 June Lord Rosebery went down to Windsor and placed his resignation in the Queen's hands. On the 24th he was succeeded by Lord Salisbury, who formed the Unionist Administration that lasted over the General Elections of 1895 and 1900 down to his retirement on 24 June, 1902. "There are two supreme pleasures in life," Lord Rosebery has said. "One is ideal, the other is real. The ideal is when a man receives the seals of Office from his Sovereign. The real pleasure comes when he hands them back." Even before he had enjoyed any personal experience of the privileges and embarrassments of a Prime Minister, except indirectly through his confidential intimacy with Mr. Gladstone, he had distinguished between the theoretical and the

actual position. The passage occurs in his Preface to Mr. C. S. Parker's biography of Sir Robert Peel. To the ordinary apprehension, wrote Lord Rosebery in 1891, the name of Prime Minister implies 'a dictator, the duration of whose power finds its only limit in the House of Commons.' The reality is very different. Technically and practically he is a chairman of an Executive Committee of Privy Councillors, the influential foreman of an executive jury.

His power is mainly personal, the power of individual influence. That influence, whatever it may be, he has to exert in many directions before he can have his way. He has to deal with the Sovereign, with the Cabinet, with Parliament, and with public opinion. . . . All his colleagues he must convince, some he may have to humour, some even to cajole : a harassing, laborious, and ungracious task. Nor is it only his colleagues that he has to deal with ; he has to masticate their pledges, given before they joined him ; he has to blend their public utterances, to fuse all this as well as may be into the policy of the Government ; for these various records must be reconciled, or glossed, or obliterated. . . . Without the external support of his Cabinet he is disarmed. The resignation of a colleague, however relatively insignificant, is a storm signal.

The position of Prime Minister, in Lord Rosebery's opinion, delivered before he was swayed by personal prepossessions, is only tolerable to a sensitive statesman if he can impress his will upon his colleagues—as Mr. Gladstone generally, if not always, succeeded in doing. That was impossible for Lord Rosebery, because in his Cabinet he numbered several Ministers who disagreed in principle with the general lines which he had laid down for the direction of foreign policy, while in domestic affairs they placed a very different interpretation upon Liberalism. They adhered,

except in the Irish land legislation inherited from Mr. Gladstone, to the individualist doctrines of the old Benthamite doctrines of Philosophical Radicalism, while they limited, so far as possible, their conception of the State to the British Isles. Lord Rosebery, on the other hand, was enthusiastically an Imperialist and tentatively a Socialist—i.e. he held no *a priori* objections to State or Municipal guidance of social and industrial evolution. It was, therefore, a genuine discord in principle, as well as a certain personal incompatibility, which led to the incessant friction in his Cabinet. These disintegrating and demoralising influences might, perhaps, have been counteracted by the 'sense of self-preservation,' if behind the Administration there had stood a strong majority in Parliament. But as there was no hope of practical accomplishment no inducement existed for mutual accommodation, and the utmost that the Prime Minister, holding, as he said, 'office without power,' could attain was to fall honourably.

Nevertheless, no sooner had he given up the seals than he plunged into the political fray with unwonted energy, for, since the time when he worked for Mr. Gladstone in Midlothian, he had indulged a growing distaste for platform oratory. It appeared afterwards that, almost immediately on the defeat of his Government, he had intimated to his late colleagues his readiness to give up the party leadership. But for the present he exhibited no signs of retirement. At the Eighty Club, on 2nd July, he made the somewhat surprising claim that rarely had a Government been more successful than his own in administering the affairs of the country. But there were two lessons which Liberals should have learned from their late experiences. One was the danger of a multifarious pro-

gramme. The other was the necessity of a large majority for dealing with the House of Lords. Neither Home Rule nor any of the other great questions raised by the party could pass the portals of the Constitution and become law 'except over the body of the House of Lords.' If they could relegate that institution to its proper place, the other reforms would present little difficulty. At the next General Election, if they had a majority of two hundred on the Local Veto, they would not necessarily be any nearer to carrying Home Rule. If they got a majority of one hundred for Home Rule, they would not necessarily be nearer to carrying One Man, One Vote. But if they carried the 'annihilation of the House of Lords as regards its legislative preponderance, which keeps our party in manacles,' they would have gone, not half, but three-quarters of the way to carrying the other reforms.

Two or three days later he delivered at the Albert Hall another fighting speech. The late Government, he said, had lived a noble life and died a noble death. It had passed great measures and wrought great acts of administration—the Parish Councils Act, the Equalisation of London Rates, the Factory Act, and the Budget of 1894. He had worked with Lord Kimberley for establishing continuity in foreign policy, and as for the taunt that he was a Liberal Imperialist, he gloried in the shame! He pointed to the comparative tranquillity of Ireland, due to its confidence in the Liberal Government and to the 'vigilant, just, and sympathetic administration' of Mr. Morley. The Irish did not want 'separation'; what they asked for was a local legislature for the management of affairs that were misunderstood, mismanaged, and neglected at Westminster. For Wales and for Scotland something had been attempted by

the late Government, but England might ask the question, 'Where do I come in?' As Sir Robert Peel once said, 'the country had outgrown its institutions.' If real legislation was required there must be a drastic reform in the House of Commons procedure. But the 'tap root of all political questions' was the power of the House of Lords. 'We are told that any violent demonstration of the popular will will always be obeyed by the House of Lords. But you cannot legislate by a series of hurricanes. Say a Government comes in with five first-class measures. There is one hurricane to support the first. Is it in human nature that there should be a second, a third, a fourth, and a fifth to support the remaining four?'

The question of the House of Lords must, therefore, be put first. The Liberal party ought to hold by all its pledges, but it should place confidence in its leaders as to when, as to how, and as to the order in which those pledges should be redeemed. 'We want in future a little air and elbow-room.' At Bradford, again, he preached on the same text—always insisting on the necessity of first dealing with the Lords.

It will be seen, then, that Lord Rosebery entered with a will upon the task which Mr. Gladstone had declined—not only from a sense of declining powers. In 1893 it was, of course, impossible for the aged statesman to start on a crusade against the Peers. But he had been similarly unwilling to take up the movement when his leadership was demanded, almost with menace, by the Radical advocates of the Reform Bill of 1884. At that time Mr. Gladstone was full of energy and had a popular cause. The Conservatives, though they encouraged the Peers in resistance to the Commons, scarcely disguised their nervous-



ness as to the issue of the threatened struggle, and some of the trimmers were counselling submission. Yet Mr. Gladstone, though he issued words of grave warning, as he was to issue them again a decade later, declined to give battle. Nobody ever charged him with lack of political courage, but it seems to have been his deliberate opinion, apart from his never-eradicated Conservatism, that the country would not support him in so violent an assault on the Constitution. Lord Rosebery formed a different estimate, but the result of the General Election scarcely justified his innovation on Mr. Gladstone's tactics. When all that is possible has been said about the shock inflicted on the party by the retirement of the veteran, about the discords between its leaders, about the conflicts of the different groups and their struggles for precedence, it must be remembered, on the other side, that no case could have been more complete against the Lords than the one which they had themselves presented by their treatment of successive measures sent up from the House of Commons. If the country did really object to the Peers exercising an independent judgment, it had ample ground for resentment in their handling of the Home Rule Bill, the Evicted Tenants Bill, the Parish Councils Bill, and the Employers' Liability Bill. If these acts did not fill up the cup of their iniquities, what would cause it to overflow?

If we are to judge by results—which, in practical politics, are the final criterion—Lord Rosebery's agitation against the House of Lords was a mistake. Whether it might have been successful, or come nearer to success, if he had been heartily backed up by the whole party, it is impossible to conjecture. When the returns of the General Election of 1895 were completed it was found that, as

compared with 1892, a majority of 42 had been turned into a minority of 152—340 Conservatives and 71 Liberal Unionists against 177 Liberals, 70 Anti-Parnellites, and 12 Parnellites.

There was nothing to be done except to face the music, and Lord Rosebery, at the opening of the new Session, was perhaps more comfortable in the House of Lords as leader of a small Opposition than as occupant of a place of nominal authority; nor would he be much disconcerted at being brought face to face with the Peers whose power he had set himself to reduce or destroy. His reception was, it may be imagined, not altogether cordial on the part of men who regarded him as an enemy of his own Order, but his defeat had been so exemplary that the victors had no excuse for any display of ill-humour. In the Debate on the Address he rose to review the general position of affairs, and found plenty of subjects for his speech before he dealt with the changed position of parties. The reports of the massacre of missionaries in China, the persecution of Armenians, and the occupation of Chitral were discussed before he came to the results of the General Election. There was, he said, nothing discouraging to the Liberal party in the new state of affairs. He bowed before the will of the nation, and did not seek to analyse its component parts. The verdict passed too readily on the late Government would, he thought, yet be reversed. It was possible, after what had happened, that there might be a variation in Liberal policy, but there would be none in their principles. The new Government had an overwhelming majority in the Lower House and a virtual monopoly in the Upper. What did the Prime Minister intend to do by way of setting their lordships' House in order?

If Lord Rosebery was able to bear with equanimity a defeat which had removed him from a false position and restored him to the liberty of unfettered criticism, the rank and file of the party were by no means inclined to rest and be thankful. They wished to examine the causes of the late disaster and to learn how it might be retrieved. It was natural that they should look for some light and leading to Lord Rosebery. Unfortunately he did not realise the desperate seriousness of their mood, and, in the whimsical fashion which he sometimes affects, chose to play with the subject. At Scarborough, for instance, on 18 October, he delivered several speeches in which he scarcely tried to answer the all-important question. He believed, he said, in the collective common-sense of the great mass of the nation, and, if the party had been rejected by that common-sense, they must, 'unconsciously and in some way of which they were unaware, have deserved that rejection.' This remark, if it were to be taken seriously, would be construed as an insult by the earnest party workers. If it were an essay in political humour, it would only be understood by a small circle of cultivated persons. Nor was he better inspired when he commented on the gullibility of the electorate, and proposed that 'Educate, educate' should be the party motto. He did not wish to be returned to power under false issues, or through a petulant impulse. Liberals should 'go for the sober and well-considered support of sober and well-considered reform,' and again he dwelt on the need for altering the present constitution of the House of Lords. Once more he failed to grasp the average sentiment. What the disappointed Liberals were thinking of was the present composition of the House of Commons.

In a third speech he at last approached the problem of the hour. The failure of the Liberals was, he said, explained by various causes. There was the loss of the magic personality of Mr. Gladstone. There was also the length of their programme. Thirdly, they had weakened their hold on the mass of the people because they had spent so large a portion of their Parliamentary time on comparatively small portions of the United Kingdom—on Ireland and Wales. The Home Rule and the Welsh Disestablishment Bills were great measures in themselves, but they did not touch Englishmen. This, of course, was to the point, but, if it satisfied the bulk of the Liberal electors in constituencies represented by Conservative or Unionist members, it roused the suspicion of their Welsh and Irish allies—who, by the way, had nearly all kept their seats.

The programme of the Unionist Government, outlined in the Queen's Speech at the opening of the 1896 Session, gave Lord Rosebery an opportunity of criticising their policy in detail. He scoffed at the idea of agricultural distress being relieved by a Rates Bill, and warned Ministers, who proposed to extend assistance to the Voluntary schools, that public funds could not be applied to such a purpose without introducing popular control. After protesting against a 'rather brutal paragraph' about aliens imported into this country, he passed on to foreign affairs. He doubted the necessity for the Ashanti War, and complained, with some justice, that in the Siamese Treaty with France we seemed to have given up a good deal and got little in return. Dr. Jameson's Raid and Mr. Chamberlain's proposal of 'Home Rule for the Rand' were made the subjects of light and not altogether ap-

propriate banter, while severe comment was passed on the irritating language which had been used to Germany. Finally, he called Lord Salisbury to account for having effected so little on behalf of the Armenians. He had threatened the Sultan, but all his strong language was only a delusion. Lord Rosebery could not believe that all had been done which might have been done. It was evident that he meant to press the Government hard on this question—as hard as he was himself being pressed by members of his own party.

Meantime he had to face a movement openly directed against his authority. A proposal was made by a Radical group to upset the arrangement under which the Central Liberal Office and the National Liberal Federation were housed in the same building and practically worked by the same staff. Under this system the Whips and the Caucus were kept in close and constant association, and the official leaders of the party were thus enabled to exercise control over the more or less representative organisation. The Radicals were now working to liberate the Federation from this sort of supervision, and gradually force it to adopt the policy of its most advanced members. But when the meeting at which the scheme was to be discussed was held, on 26 March at Huddersfield, the innovators hardly put in an appearance, and a special resolution was passed to express confidence in Lord Rosebery. His speech next day should have given satisfaction to fighting politicians, since he made every possible point, fair or unfair, against the Unionist Government. Especially in regard to foreign policy was he critical. He complained that Lord Salisbury, who hitherto had leaned towards the Triple Alliance, had, on difficulties arising with



Germany in connexion with South Africa, sought to win the good graces of France by the Siamese Convention, yet, in starting the Soudan Expedition, he had given deep offence to France and fallen back on the Triple Alliance. What should we gain by that expedition? As for the contemplated limitation of its scope, he did not believe it could be observed. He complained of lack of candour on the part of the Government, and said that their policy inspired much uneasiness. On 28 March, at a meeting of Liberal agents, he discussed the question of party organisation, and defended the arrangement under which the Secretary of the National Liberal Federation acted in the same capacity for the Central Liberal Office.

This active interest in the electioneering machinery of the party does not suggest that Lord Rosebery had it already in his mind to relinquish the command. So far the manœuvres of the Radicals had not materially weakened his position. The fatal blow was to be dealt by a friendly hand. Brief reference has been made in a previous chapter to the vigorous part which Mr. Gladstone had been playing in the Armenian agitation while Lord Rosebery was still Prime Minister. As the accounts of Turkish cruelty became more horrible and more circumstantial, the energy of the old statesman was redoubled, and, just before the meeting of the new Parliament in 1895, at a non-party meeting, he professed his wish to strengthen Lord Salisbury's hand. From the first he had declared that Turkish promises were valueless, and no scheme of reform worth considering unless it were supported by a sufficient foreign guarantee. It was necessary to apply coercion to the Sultan. To this line Mr. Gladstone steadfastly adhered. He appeared to ignore, as quite irrelevant, the

insubordination and seditious conspiracies of the persecuted race. He asserted that the atrocities practised in Bulgaria nearly twenty years before were, if anything, of 'paler colour' than those which had taken place in the recesses of the Armenian hills. The distinctive feature of the Constantinople massacres was that they had been perpetrated under the eyes of the world. To moral infamy had now been added consummate insolence.

Mr. Gladstone, as we have seen, was eager for this country to take up the crusade by itself. He did not fear that single-handed coercion of the Turk would result in war. Lord Rosebery was of a different opinion. He was convinced that the Sultan would not submit to dictation unless it were backed up by actual use of force, nor would Lord Rosebery support any menace that was not to be followed up with acts. In both respects it can hardly be questioned that his was the better judgment. Nevertheless, he threw himself into the movement for stirring up the Government to make the opinion of England felt in Constantinople. So far, he was willing to go with Mr. Gladstone. But there was a point beyond which he would not proceed, in spite of the criticisms passed upon him by some enthusiastic Liberals. In a letter to Dr. Guinness Rogers, published on 14 September, 1896, he wrote with all possible indignation against 'these last atrocities in Constantinople.' It would be a mistake, however, to 'ask the leaders of the Liberal party to give an impulse.' The responsibility rested less with the Government than with the Great Powers of Europe, and with none of them, unfortunately, did the Government seem to be on friendly terms. It would be fatal to make this a party question; it must be a national question. If there

were to be meetings, they should be 'national, spontaneous, unsectional.' 'Let them not be suspected of the whisper of faction; let them be broadly and indisputably the unprompted voice of the nation, for this will double and treble their influence and effect.'

Only a few days passed before he found it necessary to remonstrate with some of the 'Friends of Armenia.' One of these had suggested that Great Britain 'could safely go forward, depose the Sultan, and appoint his successor with a necessary curtailment of his power.' Lord Rosebery had to point out that in the August of 1895 Russia had declared her intention of opposing any Power that might take separate action. As to the demand that Lord Rosebery should define the duty of the Government, he remarked that its duty was to take every measure, not involving a European war, that would put an end to the detestable system of government (for it was a system as well as a man) which then existed in Turkey. He did not doubt that the Government were taking that course, since to doubt it would be to doubt equally their humanity and common-sense. But 'he was not prepared, in ignorance of much that only the Government could know, to assume the position of the Executive and to attempt to direct the government of the country.'

Acting on the admirable principle of not saying anything in Opposition that may hamper one in Office, Lord Rosebery steadfastly resisted the strong pressure applied from several quarters. On 24 September an indignation meeting was held at Liverpool, at which Mr. Gladstone disclaimed the idea of driving this country into war against united Europe, but he did not believe that 'independent action' on the part of Great Britain would produce war in Europe.

It was not a question of war, but coercion. Under the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1878 we were entitled to insist upon reform. It was on that condition that we had guaranteed the integrity of the Sultan's Asiatic possessions. We might begin by withdrawing our Ambassador from Constantinople. In the next place, we might publish a 'self-denying ordinance' that on no account would we turn the hostilities to our own advantage. If, however, after receiving this assurance we were threatened with war by Europe, it might be necessary to recede, as France had receded in 1840—and receded without loss of honour or of power!

I declare, in my judgment, it would be far better even to run the risk, which I believe to be no risk at all, of recession than to continue the present state of things, in which we become Ministers and co-operators with the Sultan, by ensuring his impunity and encouraging him to continue his monstrous acts.

To advance with a view to possible recession under menace! That was hardly a course that would commend itself to a statesman whose distinctive achievement it was to have redeemed the Liberal party from the charge of vacillation in foreign policy. Nor does the Cyprus Convention, to which Mr. Gladstone appealed, impose the obligation that he assumed to exist. Cyprus was given to us in order to assist us in the task of defending the Asiatic territories of the Sultan. This we undertook to do, and in return the Sultan promised to introduce the necessary reforms in Asia. As Sir Henry Fowler pointed out, we were entitled to refuse to defend Turkey if she refused to reform, and we should be bound to assist her if she did reform. Lord Rosebery, in a published letter, repudiated

the charge that he was lacking in sympathy with the Indignation movement, but he was not willing to jump from the frying-pan into the fire. 'A European war would be a scene of universal carnage and ruin—preceded or accompanied by the extermination of the Armenians.' He trusted in diplomatic action to bring the Powers, or some of them, into line. If that should fail, nothing would succeed.

In this crisis of foreign politics it should be mentioned that Sir William Harcourt, who agreed in little else with his Chief, supported him in a policy of moderation. He adopted the same view of the Cyprus Convention as had been expressed by Sir Henry Fowler, and declined altogether to entertain the project of separate intervention. Lord Rosebery, however, found himself in a position of something like direct conflict with Mr. Gladstone—a position which he considered intolerable, in view of their past relations. He decided, therefore, to retire at once from the leadership of the party. On the morning of 8 October his letter of resignation, addressed to the chief Liberal Whip, was published in the newspapers. The recent course of events, he wrote, had rendered it necessary to 'clear the air.' He found himself in apparent difference with a considerable mass of the Liberal party on the Eastern Question, and in some conflict of opinion with Mr. Gladstone—who must necessarily always exercise a matchless authority in the party—while from no quarter did he receive 'explicit support.' The situation, except as regards Mr. Gladstone, was 'not altogether new.' Lord Rosebery made no complaint against any one, but was unwilling any longer to 'appear to divide the energy and try the faith of Liberals.' The question, however, was not merely personal,



and, in the speech which he intended to make that week, he wished to speak not as a Leader, but as a free man. He, therefore, notified Mr. Ellis that the leadership of the party, so far as he was concerned, was vacant, and he resumed his liberty of action. Finally, he expressed his deepest gratitude to, and regret in parting from, those who, like Mr. Ellis, had given him loyal co-operation in very difficult circumstances.

On the next day he delivered at Edinburgh his farewell address, and began by declining the suggestion that he should treat of various policies that he might bequeath as a sort of legacy to the Liberal party. With reference to the Armenian agitation, which was being carried on with so much energy, he welcomed the meetings that were being held. They showed that the spirit of the country was not dead, but had only been dormant: the nation was not suffering from fatty degeneration of the heart. Also they tended to convince foreign Governments—which on this point required a good deal of convincing—of the unselfishness and integrity of our policy. Finally, they strengthened the hand of the Government. In foreign politics, he truly declared, he had never known party. The difference between the Bulgarian and the Armenian agitations was that in the former case Russia and her armies had been with us, in the present case they were against us. Again, in the former case the Government of the day were thwarting the wishes of the nation, in the latter they were acting with them. Nothing was further from his mind than to palliate the horrors revealed in the Consular Reports; they seemed to transcend the imagination of every fiendish device. But what could be done? Depose the Sultan? They might get a better man, and could not get a worse. But they had

to deal, not with a man, but with a method. And how could they depose the Sultan? Only through concert with the Powers. It was suggested that they might withhold the Cyprus tribute. But this money was paid, not to him, but to the bondholders. They would be injured, not the Sultan. Another proposal was to hand over the Dardanelles and the administration of the Turkish Empire to Russia. It was enough to say that neither the passage of the Dardanelles nor the Turkish Empire belonged to Great Britain. Moreover, though he never permitted himself to criticize the internal government of other civilized countries, he might point out that there had been a time, not very distant, when we strongly deprecated Russian methods towards 'Poles, Jews, and some Dissenters.' Another scheme was to withdraw our Ambassador from Constantinople. That would make an end of our only remaining method of influencing the policy of the Sultan. Besides, it would deprive our Consuls in Asia Minor and elsewhere of almost all their use and employment. Moreover, this was one of the ways in which we might drift into war—it would be a great affront by one Empire to another.

'I am obliged,' said Lord Rosebery, 'to differ from Mr. Gladstone, but we differ as friends. Perhaps Mr. Gladstone has been the indirect cause, or the latest indirect cause, of the action that I have thought fit to take. . . . There is another part of Mr. Gladstone's policy which I deprecate. What I understand it to be is this—that you are to put pressure on the Sultan by threatening him with certain action; that if you get no support from the other Powers you are not to take action, but throw the whole of the responsibility on the other Powers, and then withdraw, so to speak, into your shell. I protest against that policy. It seems to me most unfortunate, because, after all, if you can have concert with Europe, bring your concert to bear on the whole question; but do not first announce

action, and then, when you are unable to take action, withdraw, because you will only find yourself in the same position as now *plus* a public and humiliating confession of impotence.'

As for solitary intervention, Lord Rosebery would fight against it tooth and nail. 'There was, he believed, an agreement amongst the Powers to resist by force the single-handed action of England, and thus isolated action would mean a European war.

He did not profess, however, that his resignation of the leadership was entirely due to his disagreement with Mr. Gladstone and other Liberals on the Armenian Question. It was 'only the last of a series of incidents.' He did not refer to the newspaper attacks directed against him. Such criticism, when it was fair and moderate and reasonable, braced and stimulated a man; when it was unfair, immoderate, and unreasonable, it produced a reaction in his favour. He did not think that the difficulties of a Peer, as Leader of the Liberal party, were generally appreciated. He was shut up in a permanently hostile Chamber with a handful of followers. His voice could only be heard in the House of Commons through the mouth of another. At a General Election he was restricted to absolute silence.

Well, a man in that position has no chance of succeeding unless he receives very exceptional support, very exceptional loyalty, and very exceptional co-operation from the party inside and outside Parliament. Perhaps I had no right to expect any such exceptional measure to be dealt out to me: but, at any rate, I cannot say that I received it.

In the first place, at the very opening of the 1894 Session, his Administration had been beaten by their own followers — not a God-speed for a new Government. Secondly, the party had not adopted at the General

Election the definite and concentrated policy which he recommended. Thirdly, there was the Armenian agitation, which had been the 'last straw.'

Our leader—for Mr. Gladstone must always lead the Liberal party when he wishes to—has come forward, as I told you, in a noble and sublime spirit, but he has equally innocently and unconsciously administered the final *coup de grâce* to his successor, because however much I differ from Mr. Gladstone on this or any other question, I will never appear in sharp conflict with him while I am holding the position—titular or otherwise—of leader of the Liberal party.

The difficulties with which Lord Rosebery had to deal were internal as well as external. His position had become almost untenable—he had held it 'almost beyond the conditions of dignity and self-respect.' Then why had he not resigned after the General Election when a large number of his party turned their backs on his advice? Why had he not said, 'If you will not follow, I will not lead'? Because the party was then at a low ebb. It would not have looked well, it would not have been well, at the first breath of adversity to desert the sinking or almost sunken ship; but ever since the General Election his resignation had been in the hands of his colleagues, to use and put in force whenever they should think fit, and whenever the party and the unity of the party should require it. That was why he had not consulted certain of his colleagues before making this announcement of his decision—he had been overridden before by their kindness and sympathy, but this time he meant to override them. He trusted that the sacrifice he had made would promote unity—otherwise it would have been made in vain. Let the party choose its leader and then close up its ranks. Finally, he offered especial thanks to four of his late colleagues—Mr. Asquith, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Bryce, and Mr. Arnold Morley.

The omissions were sufficiently significant, and it may be declared with confidence that, if the Armenian agitation had stood alone, Lord Rosebery might and should have weathered that storm. The line he laid down was so obviously right and prudent that he would have been vindicated in public judgment as soon as the English people had recovered from their passing fit of emotion. How violent the feeling against him was among the enthusiasts may be seen from the fact that his name was hissed at a public meeting after Lord Salisbury's had been cheered—an incident that did not disturb him, he said, since, so far as he was aware, he was entirely in agreement with Lord Salisbury. Nevertheless, though Lord Rosebery professes to ignore unreasonable criticism, he has sometimes been unduly sensitive to it—perhaps through lack of controversial discipline in the House of Commons. Nor has he hitherto shown much aptitude for compromise and accommodation. His manner and temper are admirably genial and conciliatory, but he seems to expect that his opinions, because they are urged with grace and tact, must be accepted as they stand. This, of course, may be called loyalty to principle, but how a Cabinet could be formed of a dozen or twenty members similarly inflexible, it is not easy to understand. He wished other men to sink or abate their convictions—Mr. John Morley, for instance, on the question of Egypt—yet would not himself make corresponding sacrifices for the sake of unity. Mr. Gladstone was, perhaps, the most dominating personality of the last century—at least, in his own party—yet on occasion he was more ready than Lord Rosebery to modify his programme, hold his theories in suspense, and accept the views of powerful colleagues.



How far a statesman is justified in merging his individual opinions for the sake of co-operating with others for certain defined objects is a question for his own conscience. Lord Rosebery believed that between himself and some of his colleagues compromise had become impossible, and it is not for any outside observers to question his judgment. But the system of Party Government—which, with all its admitted faults, Lord Rosebery does not seek to displace—becomes impossible if every member of a Cabinet, even the Chief, insists on always acting on his own beliefs. For practical purposes it was, perhaps, a misfortune that Lord Rosebery possessed in literature, in society, and on the turf, interests which consoled him for political self-extinction. Had he been consumed with the ambition which fired Mr. Gladstone, Lord Beaconsfield, and many lesser men, the uneasy prompting of a susceptible conscience might have been stifled by the voice of a still more powerful appeal. But in one respect he resembled Lord Salisbury. He looked upon Office less as a prize than a public service, and his life is even more detached from the ordinary paths of average English politicians. Yet he seems to lack that large spirit of toleration, that power of ignoring the immediate and non-essential, which for so many years enabled the Conservative statesman to arrange and maintain a cordial *modus vivendi* with Liberal and Radical allies like the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain, and to adopt a policy, e.g. in regard to Free Education, which he had quite recently repudiated. It is possible, no doubt, to blame Lord Salisbury for such pliability, yet it preserved his main object—the union of the Unionist party. Was Lord Rosebery, in 1895 and 1896, prepared to undergo similar sacrifices for the sake of main-

taining unity in his party? If not, was this assertion of independence due to a permanent quality of temperament, or is it explained by the shortness of the period over which his official experience had then extended?

In the answer to that question lies the key to his political future. It is true that in the Unionist coalition there was no personal intrigue to fight against, and that the Liberal party of 1895 and 1896 was rent by conflicting ambitions. This notorious fact greatly increased the difficulties of compromise. Perhaps it rendered them insurmountable, since the recalcitrants did not intend to be appeased. But Lord Rosebery's frequent complaint that the party would not follow his lead at the General Election, and concentrate for an attack on the House of Lords, will hardly commend itself to political tacticians. It was his business as leader to ascertain, by consultation with the various groups, what would be the most generally acceptable programme, and to force this on the whole party—on the understanding that those who rejected it would be politely ruled out. If he had pressed such a policy, with all his personal and derived authority, he might not, perhaps, have materially increased the number of Liberal representatives in the new Parliament, but they would have come back a solid, and therefore a powerful, group. The recusants would, probably, have disappeared, or by degrees fallen into line—except the handful of cranks who are found in every House of Commons, but cannot make or mar in the fortunes of parties. Lord Rosebery, however, was at once too proud and too soft-hearted to take that course. If the party did not want him, he could do without the party. But no statesman is indispensable. To carry the airs and scruples of the *grand seigneur* into the epoch of the Caucus is

a glaring affront to political chronology. Lord Rosebery has a very intimate acquaintance with the modern history of England, but in the closing years of the nineteenth century he had not carried his studies down to the period of his own Administration. For the everyday purposes of Parliamentary life it is, perhaps, advisable to learn one's history backwards.

## CHAPTER XIII

Reappearance in public controversy—Imperial and Municipal retrenchment—Eulogies on Mr. Gladstone—Fashoda speech—Reconstitution of the Liberal party—South African War—A reference to Majuba—Mr. Chamberlain and France—The General Election of 1900—A policy for Liberals—Death of Queen Victoria—Feuds in the Liberal party—A letter from Lord Rosebery—At the City Liberal Club—The Chesterfield speech—"Clean the slate"—Rejoinders and retorts—Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902—The Lord Kitchener proposal—Free Trade speeches—Anglo-French convention—Reference to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—Party dissensions modified—Lord Rosebery and Mr. Redmond—On duality of government—At Liberal League—The League and the Party—Speech at Stourbridge—On continuity in foreign policy—On Government by Party—The example of Japan—Party versus Efficiency—Resignation of Mr. Balfour—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Administration—Lord Rosebery's position—Retrospect.

A BRIEF review may be added of Lord Rosebery's subsequent career as a public man, though divested of the responsibilities attached to leadership of a party. He has frequently declared himself unwilling to return to active politics, nor has he ever recanted that view. But many Liberals still believe, and wish to believe, that his reluctance may not prove invincible, especially as he has shown a steadily increasing interest in all the chief controversies of the day. If he is able to disclaim official responsibility for his views, it cannot be denied that he has made almost as many public speeches as any of the recognised champions of Liberalism, and he has created at least one crisis in the party. At first he showed himself disposed to make a free use of the leisure which he claimed. His

two most important appearances in 1897 were of a non-political character, yet they had a bearing on questions which before long were to be raised in an acute form. On 6 October, on being presented with the freedom of Stirling, he commented on the need for retrenchment in Imperial expenditure. The country was spending, in a time of peace, £112,000,000 a year, without a voice being raised, either in Parliament or outside it, to check the growth of the nation's outlay. 'We should be none the worse,' he said, 'for a few Joseph Humes nowadays.' A few weeks later (1 November) he was the guest of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and delivered a eulogy on Free Trade. Even on agriculture its general result had been beneficial, for, though landlords had suffered, the position of farmers and labourers had improved since the abolition of the Corn Laws, and the industry generally was not worse off than in countries where bounties and Protective duties prevailed. He believed that an Imperial Customs Union would weaken the Empire internally and excite the animosity of outside nations. If such a Union were possible—he considered it impossible—it would be something which they would all combine to destroy. Let them remember what happened that year when the Government, under the 'happy impulse of Canada,' took the 'innocent, simple, and necessary step' of denouncing the Commercial Treaties with Germany and Belgium. Throughout Europe, in every newspaper and every country, protest was raised at what we had thought quite an ordinary proceeding. What, then, would be said of an Imperial Customs Union? In these days every swamp and every desert was an object of eager annexation, and a Customs Union would be regarded as a challenge to every nation, a defiance of the world. The



British Empire at present had peace, made peace, meant peace, and aimed at peace. But an Empire presenting a uniform barrier all over the world would be a perpetual menace, a perpetual incentive and irritation to war.

In the following year (1898) it fell to Lord Rosebery to pay several tributes to the memory of Mr. Gladstone. In the House of Lords he dwelt chiefly on the faith, bravery, and sympathy of the great statesman, and mentioned, what was only known to some of his intimates, that the last few months of his life had been months of unspeakable pain and distress. Towards the end of the year Lord Rosebery pronounced at Edinburgh (24 November) a more elaborate eulogy, and appealed to the City to raise a memorial worthy of its illustrious representative. The next day he dealt, at the Philosophical Institution, with the intellectual side of its late President—‘one of the most bookish statesmen who ever lived.’ Yet he was never a bookworm. It was his principle in reading to ‘make his exports balance his imports.’ He took in a great deal, but he put forth a great deal. Indirectly, Lord Rosebery touched this year on foreign policy in a speech delivered at the Imperial Institute after a lecture by Professor Waldstein on ‘The English-speaking Brotherhood.’ He argued that the growing jealousy, commercial and Colonial, felt by Continental states for Great Britain and the United States must tend to bring the two great English-speaking nations more closely together. He also offered, at the St. James’s Hall, a vigorous defence of the Progressive policy on the London County Council. This was a few days before the triennial election of councillors, and was followed by the striking success of the party he had supported.

But it was on the Fashoda crisis that Lord Rosebery

proved his still undiminished capacity for taking the lead in his party. At a dinner of the Surrey Agricultural Association he seized the opportunity of making an important declaration. First he related the circumstances (summarised in a previous chapter) which had led him when Prime Minister to intimate through Sir Edward Grey that the expedition which the French Government had been said to favour would be regarded by Great Britain as an 'unfriendly act.' As for what had been done or attempted since that warning, he hoped for a friendly settlement, since the language of M. Delcassé had been conciliatory. But it should be understood that there could be no compromise as to the rights of Egypt. This declaration was almost universally approved in England. Very few were the Liberals who suggested that we should submit to an inexcusable aggression, and the resolute words used by the late Foreign Secretary materially strengthened Lord Salisbury in dealing with France, since he could speak with the voice of a practically unanimous people.

Not quite so general, however, was the praise bestowed on the peroration of Lord Rosebery's speech. He complained that in various parts of the world there had recently been a disposition to treat Great Britain as a 'negligible quantity.' She had been conciliatory, and her conciliatory disposition had been misunderstood. If the nations of the world were under the impression that the ancient spirit of Great Britain was dead, that her resources were weakened, or her population less determined than it had been before to maintain its rights and the honour of its flag, they were making a mistake which would only end in a disastrous conflagration. Cordiality between nations could only rest on mutual respect—respect for each other's rights, each other's

territories, each other's flag. If that respect were not cultivated on both sides—and both Africa and Asia had furnished some strange object-lessons in regard to international law and international practice—the world would relapse into a state of things most perilous for the peace and welfare of humanity at large.

There was not a sentence in this resolute speech to which exception could fairly be taken, yet, while it at once replaced Lord Rosebery in general popularity, it gave offence in quarters where the least symptom of Imperialism was regarded with misgivings. On 5 March, 1899, he confirmed these suspicions by a speech delivered at the City Liberal Club, when the mischievous spirit to which he sometimes listens moved him to discourse on the decay of Parliamentary Liberalism. 'I have no right,' he said, 'to offer advice to the politicians whom I see about me, but, if I did venture to do so, I should say that until you have the Liberal party, as it was before 1886, reconstituted in some form or another, or until you have a new party which will embody all the elements that existed before 1886, you will never achieve that predominance in the country which existed when I began public life—the heritage and almost the birthright of the party.' In the revival or reconstruction which he desired a prominent factor must be that spirit of a 'larger patriotism' which he called Imperialism. These general and intentionally provocative sentiments he pointed by a reference to Mr. Morley, who proposed to raise the whole question of the Soudan by opposing a grant to Lord Kitchener.

Next evening, Sir William Harcourt, who had equally been aimed at, took an opportunity of replying. He interpreted Lord Rosebery's timely advice to reconstitute the

party as it had been before 1886 as indicating a desire to revert to the old party programme before it had been identified with Home Rule. Mr. Gladstone's ashes were hardly cold before the Liberals were invited to wipe out the whole of the inheritance he had left! Ten days later Lord Rosebery made a neat rejoinder. At a dinner given to Lord Elgin on his return from India, he remarked that when the Viceroy had gone out he left his party in power, or at any rate in Office. On his return he found it 'disheartened by a superfluity of retired leaders.'

In view of these occasional incursions into politics, it is difficult to understand why Lord Rosebery so studiously refrained from giving a lead to his party during the anxious period that preceded the South African War. Not until the Boer ultimatum had been launched did he publish (11 October) his views. When declared they were sufficiently definite.

I think that in a survey of the past three years there is much in the relations of our Government with that of the Transvaal to criticise, if not to condemn, but that is all over for the present. It is needless to discuss how we could best have attained our simple and reasonable object of securing our fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal from an intolerable condition of subjection and injustice, and of receiving equal rights for the white races in South Africa, for an ultimatum has been addressed to Great Britain by the South African Republic, which is in itself a declaration of war. In the face of this attack the nation will, I doubt not, close its ranks and relegate party controversy to a more convenient season. There is one more word to be said. Without attempting to judge the policy that concluded peace after Majuba Hill, I am bound to state my profound conviction that there is no conceivable Government in this country which could repeat it.

After the Fashoda speech and the more recent one at the City Liberal Club, there was a certain lack of reality in

Lord Rosebery's statement that he had not previously explained his position because he was unwilling to re-enter the field of politics. The country had been looking for him to make a move and to speak out, yet he remained inactive and silent. It was known also that Mr. Krüger was 'waiting for the Opposition,' and that the ill-considered utterances of some of its best-known speakers had led him to believe that he had a strong body of sympathisers in England. He might have been disillusioned, so it was argued, if Lord Rosebery had come to the front and proclaimed the sentiments which everybody felt sure that he entertained. It would be going much beyond the ascertained probabilities to suggest, as was suggested at the time, that Lord Rosebery might have prevented the war. We know now that the Boer Government, partly in exaggerated self-reliance, partly through the expectation of European help, had decided to pick a quarrel with the Suzerain Power. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that Lord Rosebery on this occasion missed, as conspicuously as in the Fashoda crisis he had seized, an opportunity of doing a great service to the Empire.

On the other hand, it may be claimed that once he had declared himself he drove the moral home. The opening misfortunes of the war did not tempt him to make party capital against the Government. 'You do well,' he said at Bath on 27 October, 'to trust the man at the helm when you are passing through a storm. You do well to present a united front to the enemy, and it will be time enough when the war is over to examine the questions of correspondence and of preparation that may then present themselves. To my mind all those questions are wiped out by the ultimatum received from



the Boers.' In reply to the criticisms passed upon his utterance about Mr. Gladstone's magnanimity after Majuba Hill, he repeated his statement in still stronger language. The retrocession of the Transvaal was a 'sublime experiment,' prompted by 'Mr. Gladstone's deep Christianity and his overpowering conviction of the might and power of England.' But how was his magnanimity rewarded? 'We may feel perfectly confident, we who followed Mr. Gladstone, that, were he alive, and had he the control of the destinies of this country, it would not be possible for him, nor would it enter into his contemplation, to make such terms as were made after the skirmish of Majuba Hill.' It was not to be expected that this account of Mr. Gladstone's motives would be generally accepted, and indeed the late Lord Kimberley afterwards revealed that the policy of our Government in 1881 had been largely determined by the threat of the Orange Free State to make common cause with the South African Republic. Nevertheless, nobody thought the worse of Lord Rosebery for standing up for Mr. Gladstone's memory while he renounced his policy.

Not less useful was the cheerful spirit in which he discussed, on 1 November, the bad news just received from South Africa. He spoke of a recent disaster as one of those incidents that must be expected in the course of a considerable campaign. We had had experience of plenty, but we 'generally muddled out right at the end.' The phrase was fastened upon for adverse comment, but it was far more bracing to the public mind than the dolorous exclamations uttered by many public men who seemed to have forgotten that they were sprung from a fighting race.

‘Whatever happens,’ said Lord Rosebery, ‘there can be no mistake about this—we have got to see this thing through. It may cost us more battalions than we have lost; it may cost us the lives of more officers and men than we have already lost; it may cost us millions we do not yet dream of; but there is one thing certain—we mean to see this thing through.’

The distaste for party politics which Lord Rosebery had lately reaffirmed did not debar him from a favourite indulgence—a bout with Mr. Chamberlain. The disgusting caricatures of the Queen which had been published in some of the great Continental cities had roused the Colonial Secretary to an outburst of patriotic indignation. There was, it is true, nothing to choose amongst the obscene libels sold in Berlin, Brussels, and Paris, but it happened that an exceptionally odious French production had come under Mr. Chamberlain’s notice. At Leicester, on 20 November, he took to task the whole French Press, and declared that the natural indignation produced in this country would have serious consequences if our neighbours did not ‘mend their manners.’ Even more open to criticism was the invitation he extended to the United States and Germany to form a great Triple Alliance with England—not, perhaps, on paper, but an understanding in the minds of the statesmen who represented the three countries. Lord Rosebery pounced upon the indiscretion, and made amusing play with it, winding up with a neat moral lecture.

I do not say these sentiments are not right, but it is new for our responsible channels to express them, and I do trust that this career of undiplomatic frankness will cease, because, let us remember, these stinging words remain long after any solace that we can apply to them will endure. Long after the words that we utter in the hurry of the moment are buried in oblivion by us they are cherished and brought up against us by the nations they offend.

In the General Election of 1900 Lord Rosebery showed an almost ostentatious lack of interest, except that in an open letter to Captain Hedworth Lambton, who was standing for Newcastle as a Liberal, he declared that if he had a vote he should not give it to the Unionist Government, though in the present situation of the world he would vote for almost any strong Administration. For that reason he had tried to support the present one in its external policy. But it was strong only in votes. In other respects it was the weakest he could recollect. Witness its dealings with vaccination, the Spion Kop despatches, the first Education Bill, and the retreat from Port Arthur. Moreover, it had neglected social legislation, alienated foreign nations while keeping our own in a state of disquietude and distrust, and its lack of military foresight had exposed the country to humiliations unparalleled since the American war.

Lord Rosebery went on to indicate, as 'three national reforms which could not wait,' (1) Temperance legislation, (2) Better housing of the working classes, and (3) Fearless administrative reform, especially of the War Office. With regard to these, nothing could be hoped for from the present Government.

The housing of the working classes they have touched and scamped. They have appointed a Royal Commission as to Temperance, and then flouted the Commission and dismissed the subject with a sneer. Administrative reform could not safely be entrusted to those who appointed, conducted, and ignored the Hartington Commission.

He would vote for Liberals like Captain Lambton, who would support home legislation and administration on sound Liberal and practical lines, while they would 'maintain and consolidate the priceless heritage of the Empire.' On the

text of Imperialism he enlarged, in an eloquent and thoughtful address delivered on 16 November, as Lord Rector of Glasgow University. In this kind of ornamental rhetoric, if he would but polish and condense his too facile phrases and periods, Lord Rosebery would take a high place among English orators. His commonplaces are gracefully ornate, while he generally contrives to say something that is not quite commonplace. A noble theme was provided for him by the death of Queen Victoria. His eulogy, pronounced at the Royal Scottish Hospital, on 30 January, 1901, contained a striking passage.

'Have you realised,' he asked, 'what the personal weight of the late Queen was in the councils of the world? She was by far the senior of all the European Sovereigns. She was, it is no disparagement to other Kings to say, the chief of all the European Sovereigns. The German Emperor was her grandson by birth. The Russian Emperor was her grandson by marriage. She had reigned eleven years when the Emperor of Austria came to his throne. She had seen two dynasties pass from the throne of France. She had seen as Queen three Monarchs of Spain and four Sovereigns of the House of Savoy in Italy. In all those kingdoms which have been carved out of the Turkish Empire she had seen the foundation of their reigning dynasties. Can we not realise, then, what a force such a Sovereign was in the troubled councils of Europe? And when, as we know, that influence was always given for peace, for freedom, and for good government, we feel that not merely ourselves, but all the world has lost one of its best friends.'

The feud which had raged in the Liberal party in regard to the South African war came to a head in 1901. In the previous year some decent attempt was made to conceal the discord, but the extravagant language held by a few extreme sympathisers with the Boers appeared to receive some sanction from the terms—highly injudicious, if not

intentionally calumnious—in which the official chief of the party condemned the manner of conducting the war. By way of protest Mr. Asquith, as representing the Liberal Imperialists, made on 19 June a very frank deliverance. He said that he and those who had thought with him about the war had been branded as heretics and schismatics. Because they had not hitherto protested, it was being said that they had begun to see the error of their ways. But they did not repent of their views, and would not recant them. They were Liberals by conviction, Liberals to the core, eager, after these distractions were over, to resume the struggle which their party had always waged against political inequality and social injustice. But there could be no genuine co-operation except on terms of mutual tolerance and reciprocal respect. It was better that they should differ openly and frankly than that they should pretend to be at one when they were not; or, worse still, that one section of them should exult in the supposed capture or humiliation of another.

This determined attitude was hailed with delight by the Liberal Imperialists, and it was proposed to entertain the speaker at a banquet. This meant open war, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman announced that a general meeting would be held at the Reform Club with a view to restore the efficiency of the party. Between the summons and the assembling the fervour of strife had some time to abate, and on the appointed day Sir Henry attributed the schism, not to real and essential differences, but to personal antagonisms. The party would never prosper until these cabals were put down; he appealed to all present to help him in extinguishing them. Sir William Harcourt offered his testimony in favour of peace and con-



cord, and a resolution of thanks to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and of hearty confidence in his leadership was carried with acclamation. Nevertheless, Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey claimed their right to speak their minds on matters connected with the war. It was futile, said Mr. Asquith, to seek to get rid of fundamental differences of opinion by 'ambiguous formulas.' He and others who thought with him intended to express and act upon their honestly entertained convictions. Sir Edward Grey considered that the resolution passed at the meeting had given them all a charter to utter their opinions freely on questions as to which they were known to differ. Sir Henry, in reply, passed over the point raised by these inferences, but protested against organisations established for the purpose of perpetuating and accentuating differences.

Lord Rosebery had been out of England, but returned in time to intervene in the party quarrel. On 17 July appeared a letter in which he explained that, when he resigned the leadership in 1895, it was with the hope, rather than the expectation, of promoting unity. Since that time he had effaced himself so as not to embarrass his successor, but the liberty of speech and action lately conceded in regard to the war absolved him from restraint. He pointed out that no greater issue could divide a party. Moreover, this was only one of a group of questions in which there was a sincere and fundamental difference between two schools of statesmanship—the one avowedly insular, the other holding as the first article of its creed the maintenance of our free and beneficent Empire. The two sections might call themselves by the same name, and row in the same boat. But if so the boat could not advance, for they were rowing in opposite directions.

Incidentally Lord Rosebery disclaimed the idea of re-entering the arena of party politics—he would never voluntarily return to it. This was made the text for a friendly rebuke by Sir Edward Grey, who complained, at Peterborough, that if Lord Rosebery wished to promote the unity of the party he must go beyond the letter published that day. He must ‘step in from outside.’ The confidence of the public could not be gained by fitful interventions, however brilliant; it could only be gained by remaining in the stress and struggle of political life.

At the City Liberal Club, on the day of the Asquith dinner, Lord Rosebery remarked that the ‘hullabaloo’ excited by his letter had convinced him that it expressed the truth. The differences between the two Liberal sections were of old standing. He pointed to the notorious divisions in the Cabinets of 1880–5 and of 1886—they were chiefly due to foreign and Imperial questions. The present paralysis of the party was caused by its attitude on matters of Imperial concern. Had the Liberals put forward a good programme of home reform, and made it clear that they were heartily in accord with the national feeling on the war, the result might have been very different. It was noticed that his personal references were less decided than hitherto. While he still disclaimed the idea of going back to public life, he made his decision a little conditional.

‘For the present, at any rate,’ he said, ‘I must proceed alone. I must plough my furrow alone, but before I get to the end of that furrow it is possible I may not find myself alone. But that is another matter. If it be not so, I shall remain very contentedly in the society of my books and my home. If it be otherwise, I shall wait for those other circumstances to arise before I pronounce with any definiteness upon them.’

The Asquith Dinner was only attended by about thirty-five members of Parliament, but the Liberal Imperialists so far succeeded in asserting their freedom that no subsequent attempt was made to browbeat or boycott them, and, though some of those present at the demonstration objected to the detached position which Lord Rosebery chose to retain, the remarks of others showed that if he would return there would be a solid party to support him.

Early in November it was announced that he had accepted an invitation from the Chesterfield Liberal Association, and would make an important speech on 16 December. It was even more outspoken than had been expected. He began by asking whether the party—which had gone through a long and painful malady—was even yet sure that it was approaching convalescence. It was, however, free from the Irish alliance, as the Nationalists had repudiated any compact in terms almost of insult. The next point was that the party must regain unity. Finally, it must win back the confidence of the country.

Lord Rosebery's first advice was, 'clean the slate.' It was six years since the Liberals had been in office, sixteen since they had been in power. Meantime the world had not stood still. But there was Toryism in Liberalism as great and as deep, though it may be unconscious, as in the Carlton Club.

There are men who sit still with the fly-blown phylacteries of obsolete policies bound round their foreheads, who do not remember that, while they have been mumbling their incantations to themselves, the world has been marching and revolving, and that if they have any hope of leading or guiding it they must march and move with it too. I, therefore, hope that when you have to write on your clean slate you will write on it a

policy adapted to 1901 or 1902, and not a policy adapted to 1892 or 1885. Again, I would strongly urge you, and I may add that this advice applies to all parties—I would strongly urge you not to promise more than you can perform, to profess an honest Liberalism, to cut your coat according to your cloth, and not to hold out visions before the constituencies or the country which it is impossible for you to realise. Now, I speak under some reproach on that matter. I speak in the garb of a penitent, for I was a member of the Government which drew up the Queen's Speech of 1893. I looked over that document the other day. It promised for the one Session, as a beginning, a new Statutory Parliament for Ireland. It went on to promise the disestablishment of two State Churches. It proceeded with six first-class measures, any one of which would have been sufficient to tax the endurance of an entire Session, and it ended by promising some other measures as well.

. . . . .

That Queen's Speech was a model to be avoided !

Another piece of advice was not to move very much faster than the great mass of the people was prepared to go. If the Liberal party had not learned that lesson in the many years of its affliction it had learned nothing. The last piece of advice to the party was not to dissociate itself, even indirectly, from the 'new sentiment of Empire' that occupied the nation.

You may ask me what is the line of policy and what are the measures to which I should apply the axioms which I have laid down, and which I am happy to see have received the meed of your approval. Well, it is a little difficult to put oneself in the place of proposing measures. One can only do that by imagining oneself the responsible Minister at this moment, and any so wild a flight of imagination I can scarcely conceive. But my watchword if I were in office at this moment would be summed up in one single word—the word Efficiency. If we have not learned from this war that we have greatly lagged behind in Efficiency, we have learned nothing, and our treasure and our

lives are thrown away unless we learn the lessons which the war has given us. The first thing you have to look to is the efficiency of your machine—your parliamentary machine and your legislative machine. They say that Parliament is on its trial. In my judgment it has long been on its trial, and I am not at all sure that the jury have not left the box and are not now beginning to consider their verdict.

The great function of the House of Commons was its control of the public purse, yet more than three-fourths of the money voted by Parliament had been carried by the closure without discussion.

In the administrative machine what sort of efficiency was there at the War Office? In commerce and industry there was room for an energetic action by Government. In education we were lagging behind other countries. On the Temperance question a Government might do much if it would make up its mind to deal firmly with the problem—disregarding the fanatics on both sides and careless even of sacrificing its majority and its power.

This, practically, was the programme that Lord Rosebery put before the party, but by universal consent it was the least interesting part of the speech. The bulk of it was devoted to a discussion of the origin and conduct of the war, and the difficulties, real and imaginary, in the way of arranging peace. He would not sanction overtures being made to the Boers—they would only be misunderstood. He advocated not an active, but a passive, policy of peace. He did not believe that any hope on the part of the Boers of regaining their independence was the real obstacle. The real difficulty was as to amnesty. Lord Kitchener had been in favour of amnesty, and Lord Milner was against it:—

Now, if you want to consider this point, I beg of you to remember the four elementary conditions which are required



of any peace in South Africa. You must first recollect that the settlement must be a real settlement—not a sham settlement—it must be a real settlement and a permanent settlement. Then you must remember what is due to our loyal and suffering people in South Africa. Again, you must bear in mind that you do not wish to do anything to humiliate the Boers unnecessarily, or to crush the Boers unnecessarily, for they are hereafter to be your fellow-subjects, and, I trust, loyal and valuable elements in your Empire. Lastly, and most important of all, you cannot forget the great crucial, capital, radical fact of the situation, which is that, at the end of the war, the two combatant races have got to settle down and live together in such harmony as may be in South Africa. I wish the Boers to blend with our people when that time comes, and not to settle once more as a hostile and injured and a sullen camp of menace and disaffection in the midst of our territories. Well, Sir, whether they do or not, you have to deal with two capital facts: you have to deal with the fact that these Boers have hereafter to live side by side with the British, and you have to deal with the further fact that you have to bring forty thousand of them back from prison to their own country. I say, then, that in view of these facts I do not doubt on which side my vote would be cast. I am for as large and as liberal an amnesty as it is possible to give as part of the final settlement.

. . . . .

Well, gentlemen, that policy represents the best advice that I can give the country to-night. What I can do to further it I will do, for my services are, as they have always been, so far as health and strength permit—as the services of all British subjects are—at the disposal of my country. But I am under no illusion. Had I the tongue of men and of angels, I could do little or nothing, for the country last year parted with its liberty of action for the next six years on the representation that the war was over. I am quite aware, too, that my policy does not run on party lines; but it is not to party that I appeal. Party in this matter can avail little or nothing. I appeal unto Cæsar. From Parliament with its half-hearted but overwhelming majority for the Government and its distracted and disunited

Opposition, I appeal to the silent but supreme tribunal which shapes and controls, in the long run, the destinies of our people, I mean the tribunal of public opinion and of common sense. If that fail us, we are lost indeed, and I know of nothing else that remains to avail us.

The speech was republished, as a Liberal Imperialist manifesto, with a preface from Lord Rosebery asking for 'spade-work' on behalf of its policy, 'or else the wave of popular adhesion will be lost in space.' Although some passages had reflected, not indirectly, on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's censure of the methods adopted by British officers, he took the speech in good part, and at a meeting held in London on 13 January, 1902, expressed his regret that Lord Rosebery had ever withdrawn from public life. He treated the Chesterfield utterance as a sign that co-operation would be renewed. Even on the war Sir Henry appeared to think that his differences with Lord Rosebery were non-essential.

If any hopes of party reconciliation had sprung up they were soon destroyed. In the middle of February Lord Rosebery paid a visit to Liverpool, where he delivered a series of speeches. He dealt very faithfully with the Irish question. Mr. Gladstone's Bills were both dead and buried. The alliance of Liberals and Nationalists had been dissolved. The demand of Ireland had been met by the Local Government Act. Moreover, the Nationalists were now demanding more than they had asked from Mr. Gladstone—an independent Parliament. At no time, and in no circumstances, would he agree to that. Yet they had gone still further, and confessed they were working for Separation. Lord Rosebery's view was that, as County Government developed in Ireland and showed the administrative qualities of the

people, the sphere might be enlarged so as to support a superstructure. He was prepared for 'much devolution'—and this in a 'national direction'—so as to relieve an overburdened Parliament. He looked forward to some scheme of Imperial Federation which would admit local subordinate legislatures, but, as for an independent Parliament, or anything leading up to it, that 'was not on his slate.' A few days later the annual meeting was held of the National Liberal Federation, and some sharp things were said about Lord Rosebery. Finally, however, a resolution was carried which, while condemning the insistence on unconditional surrender from the Boers still in the field, welcomed the powerful stimulus given by Lord Rosebery to the policy of settlement on terms, rejoiced in the practical unanimity of the party, and calling on all Liberals in Parliament to support Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in advocating it.

But in regard to domestic policy a conflict broke out. Sir Henry emphatically rejected the Chesterfield advice—the clean slate and, its inevitable accompaniment, the penance in a white sheet. He declined to erase from the tablets of his creed any article of the Liberal faith. He refused to abandon Home Rule. Nor did he know whether Lord Rosebery had spoken to him from the interior of the political tabernacle or from some vantage ground outside. Lord Rosebery promptly replied, in a published letter, that he remained outside Sir Henry's tabernacle, but not, he thought, in solitude. He added one word more at that 'moment of definite separation.' Nobody appreciated more than Lord Rosebery the honest and well-intentioned devotion of Sir Henry to the Liberal party and what he conceived to be its interest. 'I only wish that I could have shared his labours and supported his policy.' From the

'definite separation' the only visible result was the Liberal League—an institution which reminded Sir Henry, so he presently said, of the new Army Corps which had officers but no men. He could see no reason for the new departure.

Of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902—which protected either Power against a hostile combination—Lord Rosebery spoke in Parliament with general approval, though on subsequent occasions he has praised it with a certain reserve. He elicited from Lord Lansdowne that Manchuria was covered by the phrase 'integrity of the Chinese Empire,' and that the modification of our original plans with regard to Wei-hai-Wei might have been brought about by the knowledge that this Treaty was impending.

On the Education Bill he rejoiced that it tended to enhance the strength and lustre of Municipal institutions by placing the supervision of education under the Municipal authorities, but in other respects it 'conflicted with every Liberal principle.'

It was at Plymouth, on 16 January, 1903, before the opening of Parliament, that Lord Rosebery developed his favourite idea of making Lord Kitchener Secretary of State for War. He was the Hercules who alone could have carried out the necessary reforms. There was no need for the head of the War Office to be a member of the Cabinet. He need only attend those meetings which had to do with his department. 'It is in the power of the Sovereign to summon any Privy Councillor to the Cabinet for any particular purpose, and there is no reason why he should not have adopted that course in regard to Lord Kitchener.' There were precedents for it, but Lord Rosebery would not dwell upon them. 'When you have a great reform to

carry out, and when you have a great man at hand to do it, for God's sake drop precedent for once, and come to business.' Other subjects that Lord Rosebery dealt with in a thorough-going party speech were Lord Lansdowne's co-operation with Germany against Venezuela (for which he presumed that sufficient reasons existed) and the action of the bishops in adding the 'wear-and-tear' provisions to the Education Act. It was only carried by the 'rebel Irish vote,' as it was called when the Nationalists supported a Liberal measure. Near the end of the Session he attacked the Government for their policy of inquiry in regard to the Fiscal controversy, and, as described in a previous chapter, delivered a series of speeches against Mr. Chamberlain's proposals.

Last year and this year (1904 and 1905) he has energetically pressed the Free Trade cause, and rumours have been circulated that some of the Unionists who decline to accept even Mr. Balfour's intermediate policy were sounded as to their willingness to join forces with the Liberal Imperialists. It was also stated that the terms offered by Lord Rosebery, or upon his behalf, were such as could not be entertained, because they involved the abandonment of such distinctively Conservative principles as the right of the Voluntary schools to receive a share of the local funds available for education. Whether true or untrue, or partly true, the story derived some plausibility from Lord Rosebery's known unwillingness to agree to any compromise of his own opinions. Meantime, there had been an evident tendency towards mutual agreement between the Imperialist and non-Imperialist sections of the Liberal party—partly through the retirement of Sir William Harcourt; partly because some of the politicians who had most loudly



expressed their sympathy with the Boers had been sobered by what they considered the near prospect of obtaining Office: partly, also, because most of the ablest platform speakers in the party were more or less closely associated with Liberal Imperialism.

The meeting of the Liberal League, held on 29 February, 1904, was chiefly devoted to combating the Protectionist views which had taken hold of so large a portion of the Unionist party. This, said Lord Rosebery, was the primary duty of the League. It was criminal, he declared, to 'set our people balancing between the necessities of life and the maintenance of their Empire.' At another meeting of the same organisation, held in June, a similar spirit animated the speaker. Though he reiterated his favourite demand for Efficiency, he dwelt on the common duty of all Liberals to fight bad legislation and bad administration, Protection avowed and insidious, the corrupt rule of interests such as the Liquor trade—and two consummate Parliamentary strategists. He held out certain overtures to the Free Trade Unionists, who, he believed, might be brought over to Liberalism if the Liberalism were not of a narrow, fanatical, vindictive, or retrograde type. As for Home Rule, the 'predominant partner' had not yet been won over, so there was no present possibility of establishing, or attempting to establish, a Parliament in Dublin.

In neither of these gatherings of the Liberal League was there anything to revive controversy with the followers of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and in Lord Rosebery's other speeches, whether in Parliament or on public platforms, he practically confined himself to criticising the Unionist party, its leaders, and its policy. In foreign questions he carefully observed his own principle of

ignoring Party. In the House of Lords, for instance, on the Tibet expedition, he studiously refrained, at the opening of the Session, from making out a case against either the Indian or the Home Government. The enterprise could only be justified, he said, if there existed some understanding between Russia and Tibet which might be dangerous to India, but he admitted the existence of certain suspicious facts, such as the Tibetan Mission to St. Petersburg. Similarly, on 29 October, he did not seize the political opportunity presented by a certain *maladroitness* in the Government's handling of Admiral Rodjestvensky's outrage on British vessels, but congratulated Lord Lansdowne on the happy settlement effected.

The Anglo-French Convention of 1904 was by no means to Lord Rosebery's liking, though he expressed cordial sympathy with the object aimed at—a good understanding with France. But he said that a more one-sided agreement was never concluded between two Powers in a state of peace, nor could he approve of the coast of Morocco being handed over to a great military Power. The criticism, though exaggerated, was not illegitimate, and could not fairly be resented. There could be no doubt that M. Delcassé had driven a hard bargain at the expense of Great Britain, but Lord Lansdowne, it became clear, had correctly interpreted the feeling of this country that we could receive no consideration more valuable than the good-will of France. In this connection it is worth while to recall that all the most anxious questions with which Lord Rosebery has had to deal have arisen from French ambition—Egypt, Siam, and Fashoda. In each of these grave crises he had to fight hard against the dexterous and aggressive statecraft of the Quai d'Orsay, and it has been stated, quite without founda-

tion, in some of the Parisian journals, that he is an 'enemy of France.' It is, however, true that his sympathies, so far as a Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister may indulge such moral luxuries, have hitherto leaned towards Berlin. He was intimate with Prince Bismarck and his family, and was picked out, by the great Chancellor, as the most capable of British statesmen, and in Germany generally he has been regarded with more kindness than is extended to most of our public men.

Lord Rosebery's hostility towards Mr. Chamberlain's Fiscal policy has, we have seen, increased rather than abated with the course of discussion. It was, he said, the duty of Liberals to support sane Imperialism against the 'shoddy, advertising, and terrifying kind.' He declared that 'this hanky-panky Government,' which had been called into existence simply to settle affairs in South Africa, prolonged its existence merely for the benefit of Mr. Chamberlain. As for the proposed Conference with the Colonies, he welcomed the idea 'under certain limitations,' but an abortive meeting would do more harm than good. If Great Britain were expected to tax or narrow its food-supply, the result would be disappointment and reaction. Mr. Chamberlain replied that to suggest a Conference on Preferential tariffs and exclude the taxation of food would be childish and almost insulting. To this Lord Rosebery retorted that Mr. Chamberlain had killed his own proposal. The question had been put to the country whether it would tax its food, and the reply had been an emphatic refusal. The proposal for a Conference at that stage of the movement looked like the 'second string of a broken bow.' And at Glasgow, at the end of 1904, Lord Rosebery asserted that there was danger to the Empire in the threatened clash

of pecuniary interests. The tyranny he most loathed was that of corrupt and corrupting wealth. In this controversy there were on one side almost all the aristocracy, the journalism, and the wealth of the country; on the other, was the people. Protection, he added, was no remedy for distress. In France, which was the most Protectionist country in Europe, there were at that time 400,000 men out of work. Let the Liberal party deal with social reform—with education, housing, temperance, and administrative efficiency.

Several significant speeches have been delivered by Lord Rosebery in the course of the present year (1905). At the City Liberal Club, on 9 March, he spoke of the 'scorn and detestation' with which Mr. Balfour's Administration was regarded in the country. Before such an audience it was to be expected that he would lay special stress on the disturbances apprehended in the banking world from 'trifling and tampering with the fabric of our Fiscal policy,' and from having anything to do with 'the accursed thing, Protection.' He also set himself to mitigate any alarm that might exist in regard to Liberal attacks on Property, and dwelt on 'the debt piled up in mountains by the Conservative Government.' On the Irish question he referred to the fact that the Imperial Government had within the last two years pledged its credit to the extent of £112,000,000 for redeeming the soil of Ireland from dual ownership, but declared that no Liberal Administration would propose to set up a Parliament in Dublin, however subordinate, without having made it a matter of special appeal to the country. Ten days later he replied, at Epsom, to what he called the 'genial criticism' passed by Mr. Redmond on this frank avowal. He reminded the

Nationalist leader that only seven years had passed since he had moved, on the Address, in the House of Commons, that nothing short of an 'independent Parliament' would satisfy the wants and needs of Ireland. This formal utterance had compelled many English Liberals who were Home Rulers before to reconsider their position. It was unwise, Lord Rosebery thought, to identify the cause of Ireland with 'duality of government.' It was a demand to which there would be no response from the 'predominant partner.' Short of such duality, however—short, even, of the proposals brought forward by Mr. Gladstone—there was 'a wide field to cover,' which might confer great benefits on Ireland and satisfy its aspirations.

At the meeting of the Liberal League (13 April), while Lord Rosebery developed, in his address, the topics most distinctively associated with that body—'practical and common-sense Imperialism,' Efficiency in administration, Temperance legislation, and Better Housing of the Working Classes—neither he nor any of the other speakers sought in any way to emphasise their previous points of difference from the other wing of the Liberal party. Lord Rosebery's concluding words may be quoted as indicating what he considered to be the proper attitude of the Liberal League towards the next Liberal Administration:—

Perhaps it is one of the drawbacks of descending the vale of life that one sees, by the light of a somewhat bilious experience—these evanescent hopes of political parties—that we practical and common-sense politicians cannot omit from the calculations and the possibilities of the new Government the dead brick wall of the House of Lords. My belief is that after the first year of this new Government you will find the House of Lords as resolutely, aggressively, and defiantly Tory as it has ever been in the past. I know it is very galling to the young and powerful section of the



Liberal party to be even reminded of the existence of the House of Lords ; but, at any rate, I am doing a good service to the next Liberal Government in somewhat damping down the expectations of their supporters by reminding them of the inevitable fact of the House of Lords, which, though it may bow to an outburst of national feeling, will take the first favourable opportunity, when the nation is not excited, of trimming and mangling and, if possible, rejecting your measures. Well, I hope, gentlemen, I have not wearied you by recalling to you the programme on which we were founded, and our watchword of practical, sane, common-sense Imperialism—practical, plain, common-sense politics. However discouraging may have seemed to be the tinge which was imparted to my remarks by the inevitable and utilitarian references to the House of Lords, I am, at any rate, animated by a youthful spirit of hope with regard to the future achievements and the future prospects of the next Liberal Government, if, as I hope they will be able to, they will preserve a peaceful and powerful foreign policy ; if they are able to inspire the various limbs of the Empire with a feeling of confidence that both parties in the old country are equally anxious to do justice to their strength and to their aspirations ; if they are able to make Ireland feel that, though we cannot yield to unreasonable demands which would impair our national freedom of action, yet, at any rate, they have a Government anxious and willing to redress every grievance which can be substantiated, to equalise as far as may be the conditions in Great Britain and the adjoining island. If they can fix in a satisfactory condition, not merely the voting machinery that leads up to the House of Commons, but also restore to that august assembly something of its pristine power and authority, if they are able—to repeat myself once more—to remember that the first duty of an Imperial Government is to rear an Imperial race—if, as I say, they are able to do these things, they will be acting, I do not say under the inspiration, for that would be presumptuous, but in the spirit and according to the policy of the Liberal League, and they will make it easy for all that body, whether they sit behind the Government or do not, to co-operate with all their heart and mind and energy in the glorious task which they have undertaken.

A more detailed statement of Lord Rosebery's political views was made at Stourbridge, on October 25th, 1905, and, though he still disclaimed any sense of official responsibility towards the Liberal party, it was observed that he used no language that must preclude him from joining a future Administration. This reserve was especially remarkable in regard to two questions on which avowedly he was not in entire accord with other Liberal Imperialists. As to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance of the present year (1905), he declared that it was the natural consequence of the Treaty of 1902—nor would he have been bold enough, he added, to face the alternative of not making a Treaty at all. Similarly, in his reference to the Anglo-French Convention, while he reaffirmed the doubts which he had several times expressed in 1904, and repeated even more strongly in 1905 at the City Liberal Club, as to the prudence of the bargain over Morocco, he rejoiced that his 'old friends on the front Opposition bench did not share his misgivings.' 'They have swallowed the policy of the Government whole, they have taken it at a gulp. I was not able to masticate all of it, but that was a matter only for me and my political digestion; they have been able to swallow it all, and, although I have not been capable of that heroic feat, I rejoice that they have done so.' If these words seemed to any of his hearers to suggest a doubt as to Lord Rosebery's acceptance of the two 'accomplished facts' in British diplomacy, it would be removed by his explanation of the satisfaction he felt. 'It means,' he went on, 'continuity of foreign policy'—an object for which he had striven and laboured for twenty years, and which at last seemed nearly to be realised. 'A second-rate foreign policy

which is continuous is better than a first-rate foreign policy which is not continuous.' One that is not continuous inspires distrust abroad, whereas a continuous one, even if inferior, enables foreign countries to feel confidence in Great Britain and to throw aside their misgivings as to the play and reaction of our Parliamentary institutions.

Lord Rosebery's general criticism of these two Agreements, apart from his special objections to the Morocco arrangement, was based mainly on the duty of impressing the country with a sense of the heavy obligations it had incurred and of the enmities that might have been awakened. 'Whether for good or for evil, a Treaty is an engine of tremendous power and tremendous liability.' It may give rise to animosities, counter-intrigues, and hostile combinations. Lord Rosebery's allusion to German feeling was what might have been expected from a statesman whose inclination, as we have already seen, has been towards a cordial understanding with Berlin.

I cannot understand why friendship with France should involve such violent polemics with Germany as now rage between the two countries, and which I do not believe represent the real feeling of the two nations—though they may represent the feeling of some or all of the Governments—of that I know nothing—but I do view these polemics as a serious danger to peace, as poisonously influencing the two nations and the growing generations of the two nations. Therefore I am one of those who deprecate most sincerely the view, which appears to prevail in some quarters, that cordial relations with France mean irreconcilable animosity to Germany.

There was, of course, no foundation for Lord Rosebery's suggestion that Mr. Balfour's Administration might conceivably have been influenced by the motive which he deplored, but in other respects his words of warning were

such as might well have been uttered by a statesman who would, in easily imaginable circumstances, be called on to play an important part in directing international relations.

Nor in the passage in which he discussed the position of Home Rule was there any expression that need debar him from active co-operation with the Liberal party. It was impossible, he said, to go through the stress of a General Election without making some definite declaration. Those Liberals—and there were many—who were still in favour of creating a Statutory Parliament for Ireland must either confess that they could not deal with it in the coming Parliament or they must treat it as a matter of ‘such imperious and vital interest’ that they would put it to the constituencies as the ‘main and supreme question’ at the General Election and make it the first measure of the first Session of the new Parliament. The latter course, he inferred, would not be adopted by the Liberal party. Now it would not do to attempt a ‘middle policy’—to place Home Rule in the position of a reliquary, and exhibit it at great moments of public stress, as Roman Catholics exhibit the relics of a saint. This was not consistent with sincerity, nor would it gain sympathy or success in the country. There was, however, another policy—and this Lord Rosebery manifestly favoured—which seemed to be marked out by the course of political events for the next Liberal Government. This was to carry out ‘large administrative reforms’ and to aim at ‘development of local institutions.’ Briefly, Lord Rosebery, without abjuring Home Rule as a possible ultimate concession, declared that, for the present, the Liberal party should limit itself to what is somewhat vaguely, though not inconveniently, described as Devolution—a policy that may mean much or little according to the spirit in which the phrase may be interpreted.

Obviously, this is an arrangement in which the Nationalists cannot be expected to concur unless the Liberals are in a position to dictate the terms of co-operation, and, therefore, Lord Rosebery, like Mr. Gladstone in 1885, asked for something more than a bare majority—‘a great and swinging majority.’ All the chief articles of the party programme—so far as they had been formulated when he spoke at Stourbridge—were adopted and commended, the first place being given to the establishment of national education on a national foundation. Special stress was laid on Temperance legislation, the Housing of the working classes, Relief of meritorious poverty, and the Land question, while, of course, ‘the blessed word Efficiency’ was again mentioned with honour, and the need of Imperial and Municipal retrenchment was dwelt upon, particularly in regard to the Army. In the past ten years we had spent £2,710,000,000 as against £1,639,000,000 in the previous decade—at the rate of £107,000,000 a year more than we did in 1885-95. When the electors meditate, said Lord Rosebery, on the figures of this enormous expenditure, they ‘will think once, they will think twice, they will think thrice before they play any fiscal tricks or tax the food of the people on which so heavy an encumbrance rests.’ Retaliation, he declared, was not a policy at all; it was but a half-way house for tender and afflicted consciences. The issue before the country would be Free Trade *versus* Protection.

On the Licensing Act, the Education Acts, and the Chinese Labour question, Lord Rosebery has recently shown himself to be in harmony with the main body of the Liberal party. It was also noticed with much interest that at Edinburgh in October he had gone out of his way to speak in the most cordial terms of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman,



and welcomed him 'on his return from his well-earned holiday to take the command of the forces of the Liberal party.' Sir Henry, perhaps by way of acknowledgment, disclaimed any intention of reversing the foreign policy of the Unionist Government.

A few days previously, however, Lord Rosebery had spread consternation among some of his friends by publishing an attack on the system of Party Government. It was contained in a Preface which he contributed to Mr. Alfred Stead's book, 'Great Japan : a Study in National Efficiency.' Such a title was more than Lord Rosebery could resist, but readers who will go carefully through what he then wrote will discover that his conclusion is less formidable than his premisses. He maintains—what cannot be denied—that many persons in our country, especially in high places, worship Party as a god. It is considered as inevitable as the fog,

yet its operation blights Efficiency. It keeps out of employment a great many men of precious ability. It puts into place not the fittest, but the most eligible from the Party point of view—that is, very often, the worst. Efficiency implies the rule of the fittest ; Party means the rule of something else—not the unfittest, but of the few fit, the accidentally not unfit, and the glaringly unfit.

Lord Rosebery does not seek to abolish Party, he recognises it as part of our moral climate ; but we must bear in mind that when we aim at Efficiency we shall be 'handicapped by this formidable encumbrance.'

We regard our parties as interesting groups of gladiators. Our firmest faith appears to be that the one will do worse than the other, so we maintain the other. . . . We know too well that our Ministers, however great the ardour and freshness with which they set to work, will soon be lost in the labyrinthine

mazes of Parliamentary discussion, and that whatever energy they can preserve when they emerge must be devoted to struggling for existence on provincial platforms.

On that showing, it might well be retorted that eminent servants of the State should be provided with seats in that House of Lords whose shortcomings and iniquities have so often been denounced by its most brilliant member. Even of the Party system his condemnation is but conditional. We are to learn from Japan, where political strife is more violent than here, 'how to obtain Efficiency in spite of the party systems.' There is, perhaps, no living student of our Parliamentary history who could write a more entertaining defence of that Government by Party which has won us our liberties, and given us a set of institutions which, illogical, anomalous, and incomplete as they may be, work, on the whole, more cheaply and efficiently than what Lord Rosebery has called the 'matchless Constitution' of the United States.

We have traced the course of what seemed to be a mutual approximation between Lord Rosebery and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. It was generally, though not universally, expected—it was generally, though not universally hoped—that the two men would find a way of working together in the same Administration, although, as we have seen, Lord Rosebery had never made any explicit intimation of readiness to forsake his independent position. These sanguine anticipations were confirmed towards the end of last month (November, 1905) by a series of fighting speeches delivered in Cornwall on behalf of the Liberal party. It was not before the last day of this political tour—throughout which he had been received by the local Associations with all the wonted honours of a Party leader—

that Lord Rosebery gave a sharp and unexpected turn to the position. He had just had brought to his notice a certain passage, in a speech recently delivered at Stirling by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in regard to Home Rule:—

If I were asked for advice—which is not, perhaps, very likely—by an ardent Irish Nationalist, I should say, ‘Your desire, as mine, is to see the effective management of Irish affairs in the hands of a representative Irish authority. If I were you I would take it in any way I could get it, and, if an instalment of representative control were offered to you, or any administrative improvement, I would advise you thankfully to accept it, provided it was consistent with and led up to your larger policy.’ I think that would be good advice; but I lay stress on the proviso that ‘it must be consistent with and lead up to the larger policy.’

Later on in the same speech Sir Henry went on to express his hope that the opportunity of making a great advance in the question of Irish Government would not long be delayed. Now there were two possible ways of reading Sir Henry’s declaration. It might be taken as explaining why he did not intend, if he became Prime Minister, as it was known that he did not intend, to bring in a Home Rule Bill during the next Parliament. In lieu of that, however, he undertook to propose a considerable measure of Devolution—a measure which the most ardent Irish Nationalist might accept, because it would not be inconsistent with, and would lead up to, Home Rule. On the other hand, the words might mean that the official Liberal Leader had once again pledged the Party to Home Rule—though not to a Bill for the new Parliament. This was the light in which Lord Rosebery viewed the position, and “under that banner,” he exclaimed at Bodmin, “I will not fight.” Here, it appeared, was a sharp rupture between the

two men. Did it mark an irreconcilable disagreement, or was it only a misunderstanding that might be removed?

No explanation was offered to Lord Rosebery, either in public or private. But the three most prominent of Lord Rosebery's associates in the Liberal League—Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Haldane—made haste to announce that they did not accept his view of the Stirling utterance. Speaking on December 11th, at the Council of that body, he did not complain because their interpretation differed from his own, but showed plainly that his own opinion was unchanged. He suggested that they might have received private explanations which enabled them to reconcile their known principles with the attitude taken up by Sir Henry, but pointed out that his own interpretation had been adopted by the Nationalist Press, which had asserted that every vote given for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman would be a vote given for Home Rule.

Meantime, between the speeches at Bodmin and the Liberal League, Mr. Balfour had resigned Office, and Sir Henry had been summoned by the King to form an Administration. His Cabinet, the list of which was published on the morning of the day on which Lord Rosebery made his second statement, contained Sir Edward Grey as Foreign Secretary, Mr. Asquith as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Haldane as War Minister, and Sir Henry Fowler as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

There was no touch of bitterness, or even of disappointment, in Lord Rosebery's reference to the new Cabinet:—

Let me at once take the opportunity of publicly congratulating my friend Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman on the

position which he has achieved, and which is so entirely his due in respect of his long fidelity and strenuous exertions on behalf of the Liberal party, a distinction which none will grudge him, and which all must wish to see him fill with approbation for himself and success for his country. Let me also congratulate the other members of the Government. They are, I think, all of them in private my personal friends. I speak generally, because there are so many of them that I should not like to be certain of every one ; but certainly my view, unless I receive any disclaimer, is that each and all of them are my personal friends. And, gentlemen, I think we must all feel that the constitution of the Government as announced this morning is one that must fill us with confidence. All the offices are well filled, some of them by men of established reputation, although the ranks of the Cabinet of 1892-1895 have been sadly thinned by death. But others, and these I welcome and you will welcome with equal heartiness—are what is called young and fresh blood, so desirable, as I think, in the Government of the country. But there are among these appointments four which interest us specially and peculiarly—I mean those of the vice-presidents of this League. I think that the League must feel, if for no other reason, that it has not lived and worked in vain when it sees those four vice-presidents, in positions of high and conspicuous trust, included in the new Government.

The only complaint made by Lord Rosebery was that he had not been vouchsafed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman any explanation of the Stirling speech,—as such an explanation ‘would not have been derogatory to any Leader or Minister.’ But, though still unsatisfied as to the Irish question, Lord Rosebery recognised that the duty of the Liberal League was to assist in maintaining the unity of the Free Trade party—to strain every nerve that ‘an overwhelming number of the constituencies’ should return members in favour and in support of the new Government.

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The foregoing record of Lord Rosebery's public life was undertaken in order to supply the missing volume in the series of 'The Queen's Prime Ministers,' but the narrative has been carried beyond the fall of the last Liberal Government, and brought down to the formation of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Cabinet (December 1905). Throughout, the writer has endeavoured to divest himself of partisan bias in his treatment of such questions as required comment or explanation, and, in every instance, to set out both sides of the case. No attempt has been made to pronounce judgment on a career which may not yet have passed its middle stage, or to present a complete picture of the statesman who is at once better known and less known than any of his contemporaries. In one sense he lives in a glass-house; in another sense, behind an unlifted curtain. We all know the Lord Rosebery of Parliament and political platforms; the chairman at philanthropic banquets and the advocate of Technical Education; the historical essayist and the literary critic. We are almost equally familiar with the Lord Rosebery of the Turf, at the Theatre, and in Society, the companion of Princes and the comrade of working-men politicians. Yet of the man himself, of the objects which he has in view and the motives that guide his conduct, the nation which he has interested for more than a quarter of a century has no distinct conception. Those who speculate most keenly as to his future course frankly admit that they possess insufficient data for their forecast.

The difficulty arises from no special inconsistency in his principles. There are, indeed, few politicians of our time who have as little to recant or less need to practise the arts of self-sophistication. On the Home Rule question

his attitude has, no doubt, varied with altered circumstances. He was, it will be seen, one of the first of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues to join in the new departure. But, though a witness, he was 'not an enthusiastic witness' in favour of Home Rule. In 1886, as in 1893, the question to him was one of policy—'no higher and no lower.' In 1894, when he made his 'considerable admission,' that 'the predominant partner' must be convinced before the Nationalist demand could be conceded, he was thinking, not of abstract justice, but of Parliamentary possibilities. A few days afterwards, it is true, he withdrew his disturbing declaration, and professed his readiness to bring in a third Bill if he were supported by a majority of a hundred in the House of Commons. More recently he claimed that the Liberal party had been released from its pledge when the Nationalist leader raised his terms, and insisted upon an independent Parliament with an Executive responsible to that Parliament. Though he is still willing to support a considerable extension of local self-government, and would not perhaps oppose a moderate measure of Devolution, he has made it plain that he will take part in no policy that may 'lead up to Home Rule.' It would be idle to deny that his course on the Irish question marks both advance and regress, but he may fairly claim that the successive modifications of his attitude have always been adjusted to the changing conditions of the problem.

He has been charged with inconsistency in regard to the Fiscal policy of the Empire because in 1888 he dwelt on the fact that our Foreign Office had come to be occupied less with the protection of India than with the growing interests of the self-governing Colonies. He contrasted our exports to Canada and Australia as measured by their popu-

lations (thirty shillings a head, in one case, and seven pounds in the other, per annum) with our exports to the United States—the Colony which had left us, and was then taking about eight shillings a head. If the other Colonies were to leave us he did not believe that they would remain as good customers as they had been. The question how to retain them within the Empire was, he said, one which should be pressed upon the attention of the British Chambers of Commerce. It was, he believed, impossible to ‘maintain in the long run the present loose and indefinite relations with the Colonies.’ He looked forward to the ‘great boon of a peaceful Empire circling the globe with a bond of commercial unity and peace,’ and admitted that such benefits could not be obtained without some sacrifice. Great Britain must be prepared to admit the Colonies to a much larger share in its affairs; must expect to be presented with demands ‘sometimes unreasonable, such as spoiled children sometimes make’; must reconcile itself, perhaps, to diminishing its own insular freedom in favour of its great offspring abroad.

Here, as it has been pointed out, Lord Rosebery was thinking, not of a series of commercial treaties between the Mother Country and the Colonies, but of a single and comprehensive Imperial Zollverein—Free Trade within the Empire coupled with Protection, or the possibility of Protection, against outside nations. Nevertheless, when Mr. Chamberlain’s scheme was first launched on 15 May, 1903, Lord Rosebery, four days later, refused to condemn it off-hand. In a speech to the Burnley Chamber of Commerce he weighed the fiscal arguments on both sides, and intimated that the balance might perhaps be turned, even against economic considerations, by the advantage of uniting the

Empire. His subsequent repudiation of Mr. Chamberlain's policy, root and branch, was mainly based on what he regards as the impossibility of working out a detailed arrangement, but he was also influenced by the fear that the jealousy excited among foreign powers by a policy of Fiscal exclusion would more than counterbalance the benefits of Imperial consolidation. Here, again, it is perfectly legitimate to complain that Lord Rosebery has changed his mind or, at least, has given new values to old facts, but in this case, as in that of Home Rule, his reasoning, whether good or bad, must be quite intelligible even to those who reject the conclusion which he has reached.

There is no uncertainty, because there is no obscurity, as to the workings of Lord Rosebery's mind. What he thinks and what he will say on any given question may be anticipated with tolerable confidence. The difficulty begins when we ask how we will apply his known or deducible principles to his practical conduct. No such enigma has been offered to their countrymen by other Party leaders of modern times—not by Mr. Gladstone or Lord Beaconsfield or Lord Salisbury, Mr. Parnell or Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Balfour or Mr. Chamberlain. The inner operations of their intellects it may have been difficult to forecast, but, the opinion once proclaimed, the resulting action could in each instance be a matter for obvious and confident inference. In Lord Rosebery's case the unascertained factor is that, to all outward seeming, he is the very antithesis of the Roman statesman of whom it was said that 'whatever he desired he desired very strongly.' If we are to judge Lord Rosebery by his acts, we should probably say that he has never made up his mind whether he does or does not wish to play a great part in the political history

of England. But it must be remembered that, with all his debonair frankness as to his opinions, he has never, directly or indirectly, taken the country into his confidence about his ambitions.

So long as he acted under the influence of Mr. Gladstone his course was plain. Though he declined high Office in 1880, his refusal is sufficiently explained, as will be seen in the text of this sketch, by motives creditable to his personal modesty. Nor can he be charged with vacillation because he subsequently accepted, and soon afterwards resigned, a minor post in the Administration from which he had at first stood aside. His consent to enter the Cabinet in 1885 was, as will be seen, an instance of self-sacrifice, and of the personal devotion to Mr. Gladstone which was the dominating influence of his earlier career. He had something to lose, and nothing to gain, by associating himself with the fortunes of a discredited and falling Government. But his allegiance to Mr. Gladstone implied no surrender of the right of independent judgment. Indeed, he may be said to have set himself by degrees to convert the Chief of the 1880-5 Administration from that indifference to our interests abroad which had brought about its collapse. There was no long interval between his assumption of the name of Liberal Imperialist and his declaration that he would be content to 'walk under the same umbrella as Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright.'

It was the natural sequel to this definition of his political attitude that he should take office as Foreign Secretary in the Cabinet of 1886, and it has been shown how successful he was, in those few months of probation, in reversing the public verdict on the conduct of our external affairs by the Liberal party. From that date he seemed to have



deliberately set himself to maintain and practise the rule—which constitutes his permanent title to deep national gratitude—that before all things it is necessary that the foreign policy of Great Britain shall be unaffected by the vicissitudes of Party fortunes. As he has recently put the matter, a second-rate policy which is continuous is better than a first-rate policy which is not continuous. This binding principle he again maintained when—after some hesitation, due, however, to the state of his health—he returned to the Foreign Office in 1892, and he has faithfully observed it, during ten years of Opposition, in the criticisms which from time to time he has passed on the diplomacy of Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne, and in the backing which he has given them at more than one important crisis.

This self-imposed obligation does not, of course, exclude the right of pointing out mistakes which he believes to have been committed, or perils incurred. It cannot be considered incumbent on an Opposition leader, even if he be ex-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to applaud a Treaty, such as the 1904 Convention between Great Britain and France, which he looks upon as improvident or one-sided. He is, again, clearly entitled to point out the heavy responsibilities involved in the new Alliance with Japan. The principle of continuity is sufficiently preserved when an ex-Minister is ready to abide by the undertakings given by the Government of the day. This should avail to redeem Great Britain from the fear, entertained by foreign statesmen, that its action abroad may suddenly be modified or reversed by the play of political motives and the turns of domestic controversy.

The explanation, in domestic affairs, of what some of Lord Rosebery's detractors or candid critics call his

indecision, vanity, or even perversity, may be that he has developed in recent years the habit of judging the present by the past, and of looking beyond the opinion of to-day to the verdict of to-morrow. What would be a merit in the philosopher is a handicap to the man of action. Probably, when the time comes for a full appreciation of his career, it will be found that none of the 'bookish statesmen' of whom he has pleasantly discoursed were, whether for good or evil, guided in an equal degree by that historical sense which is imparted by a minute study of previous centuries. It has even been said of Lord Rosebery that he knows more about the English Parliament in the time of Pitt and Fox than about the present House of Commons. Certainly he has been disposed, on various occasions, to take 'long views' of current controversies, and pay little, perhaps too little, heed to the opinions and judgment of the hour.

Occasionally he has given offence to practical politicians of the more strenuous order by ignoring the topic on which their attention was fiercely concentrated, and, with an air of philosophical detachment, ventilating some irrelevant theory. Worse still, he cannot always control a whimsical humour, and plays, with exasperating zest, round and about subjects of serious concern. His followers are awaiting a solemn pronouncement from the platform; suddenly, he withdraws, as it were, into his library, and produces an elegant essay on nothing in particular. Only the other day, when the dissensions in the Liberal party seemed on the point of being healed, and men were wondering whether he would be induced to claim a share in the fruits of the anticipated victory, he felt himself impelled to denounce the system of Government by Party, and jeer at the straits

of Ministers emerging from the toils of Office only to 'struggle for existence on provincial platforms.'

Free as he is from any affectation of social superiority, he has hitherto approached politics with the bearing of a *grand seigneur*, as though public life has nothing to bestow with which he cannot easily dispense. This attitude, while it gives him an independence which is specially important in the treatment of foreign affairs, since it holds him above the currents of a hasty popular judgment, prevents him from realising the necessity, under which all modern statesmen incessantly labour, of carrying with them the opinion of those to whom they are accountable—whether of the country at large or only of Parliament.

This patrician disregard for the verdict of the moment is, no doubt, explained by the fact that Lord Rosebery never sat in the House of Commons, and thus received no training in the task of working, hour by hour, to win or retain a majority for the business of the day—neglect being punishable by defeat in the Lobbies. In the House of Lords, it is useless for the leader of the Liberal party to practise the arts of tact and compromise, since he is at any moment liable to discomfiture when his adversaries choose to exert their strength. Living on sufferance leaves no room for the exercise of generalship, and, in spite of his personal popularity, Lord Rosebery's bearing towards his brother Peers—on the critical occasions when his good-humoured irony would be inadmissible—has been defiant rather than conciliatory. In the House of Lords he is, sometimes, almost aggressively democratic, while on a public platform, if he is dealing with a matter of controversy, he is apt to exhibit for other men's views an intellectual intolerance which is in marked contrast with his easy humour.

Similarly, his unwillingness to abate any of his personal convictions in deference to the views of his colleagues may be traced to his brief experience of Ministerial life. In taking account of the dissensions which broke out in his Cabinet almost as soon as he had formed it, the fact should be borne in mind that his previous training had been limited to a few troubled weeks in 1885, when even Mr. Gladstone's strong hand hardly availed to maintain an outward semblance of unity, and to a similarly brief term in 1886, when the first Home Rule Bill was being threshed out amidst daily conflicts of opinion and the strife of jarring ambitions.

Handicapped as he has been in these respects, it is admitted by Liberals who have least sympathy with the Imperialism associated with his name that his personal following among the electors has been and remains very strong—that if he chose to use his power he could upset any Liberal Cabinet of which he was not a member. Amongst Scotchmen, whether they live in their own country or in England, he is regarded with affectionate pride as an Imperial statesman who has always kept up a close connection with his own people, who is never happier than when he is celebrating the glories of the national history or dwelling on the beauties of the national literature. His fervid yet scholarly appreciations of Burns and Scott are assets in his political estate. Again, the London Progressives retain a kindly memory of his services in the early days of the County Council, while he has not outlived the gratitude of the working classes for his settlement of the Coal Strike and for his unfailing sympathy with the needs and claims of Labour—a sympathy which he has proved by practical efforts, while he has never marred its grace either by airs of condescension or by incurring the

suspicion of political courtship. Certainly, they do not like him the less because he is a Peer or because, like Cromwell, he 'owns some good horses.'

In spite of his detached attitude, nothing is less probable than that a statesman so vigorous in criticism, and so active in propagating his views of a constructive policy for the British Empire, has finally relinquished the intention of claiming once again a front place in the public life of England.

*December 15, 1905*





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